

OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER

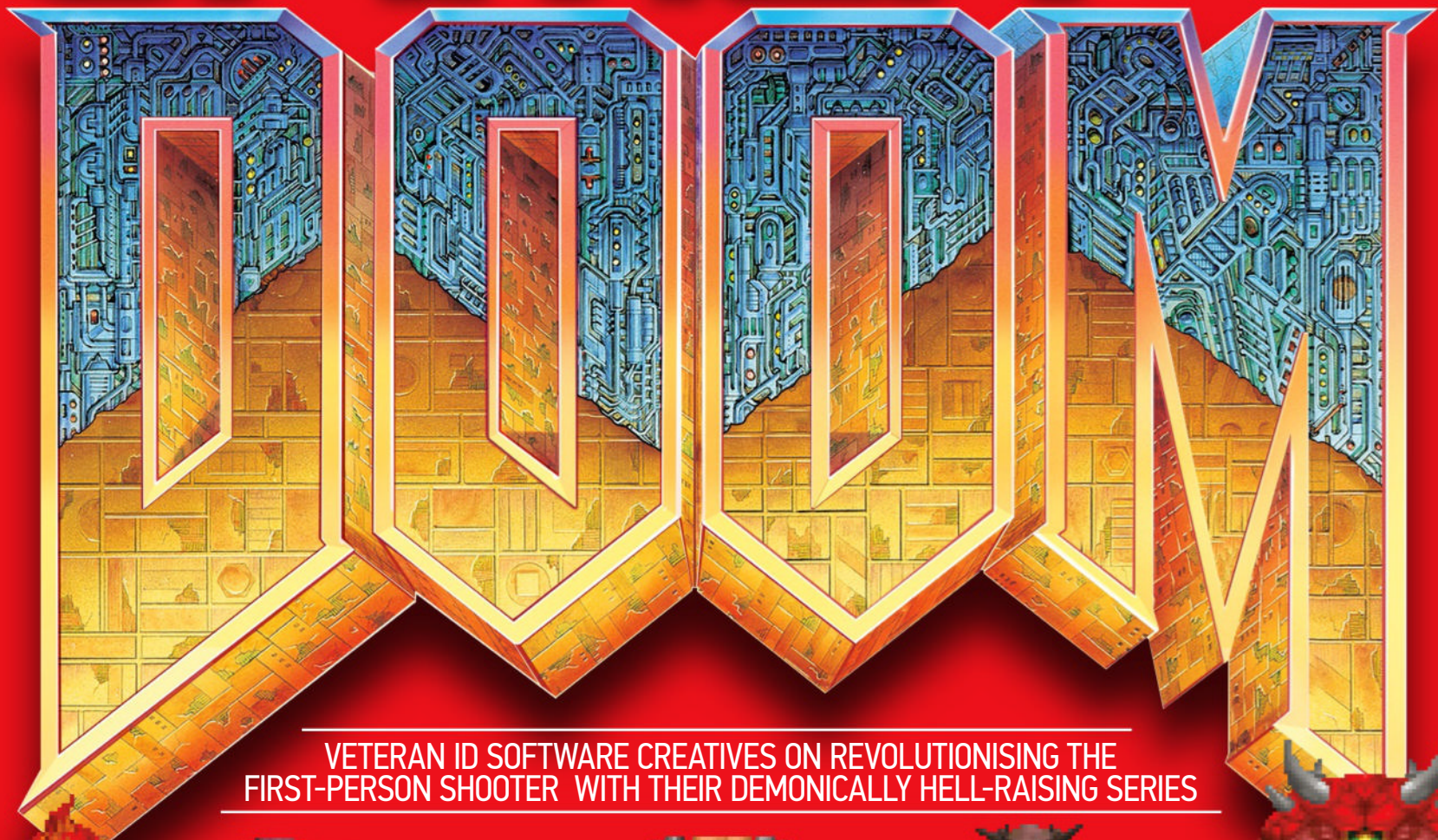


THE MAKING OF: APE ESCAPE

HOW SONY'S MISCHIEVOUS PRIMATES
SWUNG ONTO THE PLAYSTATION

ESSENTIAL GAME GEAR GAMES

THE BEST TITLES TO EXPERIENCE
ON SEGA'S PORTABLE CONSOLE



VETERAN ID SOFTWARE CREATIVES ON REVOLUTIONISING THE
FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER WITH THEIR DEMONICALLY HELL-RAISING SERIES



RETURN TO ONIMUSHA 2

HOW CAPCOM IS
REVITALISING A CLASSIC
FOR A NEW GENERATION

DISNEY'S EARLY GAMES

REVISIT THE 8-BIT AND
16-BIT GAMES FROM
THE HOUSE OF MOUSE



INSIDE 750CC GRAND PRIX

BEHIND THE SCENES
OF THE CULT 8-BIT
MOTORBIKE SIMULATOR

THE MAKING OF MUSHA ALESTE

KAZUYUKI NAKASHIMA
ON COMPILÉ'S BOLD
MEGA DRIVE SHMUP

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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE
DOOM ENEMY?

DARRAN JONES

I'm going for *Doom 64's* Pain Elemental. If you thought Cacodemons were scary, wait until you see what a resurrected one looks like.

Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!

Currently playing:

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33

Favourite game of all time:
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast



TIM EMPEY

Killing Cacodemons with the Plasma Rifle is always fun. Everything dies so quickly in *The Dark Ages* that I haven't really got to know the new ones.

Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go

Currently playing:
Doom: The Dark Ages

Favourite game of all time:
God Hand



NICK THORPE

When I play *Doom*, I don't kill enemies. I instead succumb to my own greatest enemy, motion sickness, and blast the contents of my stomach everywhere with the force of a Super Shotgun.

Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III

Currently playing:

Penny's Big Breakaway

Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



ANDY SALTER

The first time I played *Doom* was on the Sega 32X. I always liked the Baron Of Hell, as on that version they were the final boss you faced.

Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!

Currently modding:

RTR: Imperium Surrectum

Favourite game of all time:
Rome: Total War although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now



PAUL ROSE

The bog-standard zombie grunt soldiers at the start. One shot. So satisfying.

Expertise: Winging it

Currently playing:

The Legend of Zelda:

Echoes Of Wisdom

Favourite game of all time:

Half-Life 2



STUART HUNT

Zombieman. There's nothing more satisfying in the series than drilling through a corridor full of them with a Chaingun.

Expertise: Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:

Contra: Shattered Soldier

Favourite game of all time:
Donkey Kong

LOADING...



You have to hand it to id Software, it certainly knows how to make a kick-ass first-person shooter. I've been playing through

Doom: The Dark Ages and have had a right laugh with it. I'm not quite finished with it yet (hence no review in this issue) but it's already clear to see that it's a great alternative to the reboot of *Doom* released in 2016. In fact, I've been having so much fun with it that I've returned to the original game on Nintendo's Switch, which is as satisfying to play today as it was when I first experienced it on my mate's 486 back in the early Nineties. So join us this month for a look at the entire *Doom* series and how it has constantly evolved and helped reinvent the FPS genre for over 30 years.

If chainsaws and Cacodemons aren't your thing then there is plenty more to rip into this issue. We go behind the scenes of *Ape Escape*, *MUSHA Aleste* and *750cc Grand Prix*, chat to Paul Glancey about his time in magazines, tick off some of the best Game Gear games of all time, and introduce a brand-new columnist, Digital Eclipse's Mike Mika. Oh, and there's a fantastic 32-page magazine about the games of Shigeru Miyamoto, so if you're not a subscriber already, head to page 32 and take out a subscription. That way, great extras like this will be delivered directly to your door.

Stay safe and enjoy
the magazine.



RORY MILNE

I'm going to say Pinky. I love his Minotaur vibe, I respect that he can move such a bulky frame around so quickly and it's always satisfying to take him down.

Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing

Currently playing: *Rayman*

Favourite game of all time:
Tempest



ANDREW FISHER

There's something satisfying about leaving the Cacodemon in a red squishy heap behind you.

Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch

Currently playing: *Gorf*

Favourite game of all time:
Wizball

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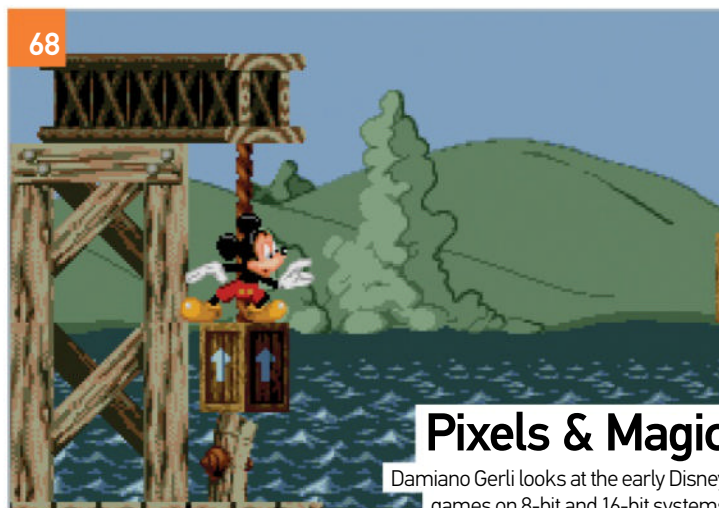
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The Making Of: Ape Escape

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Magazine Craft: Paul Glancey

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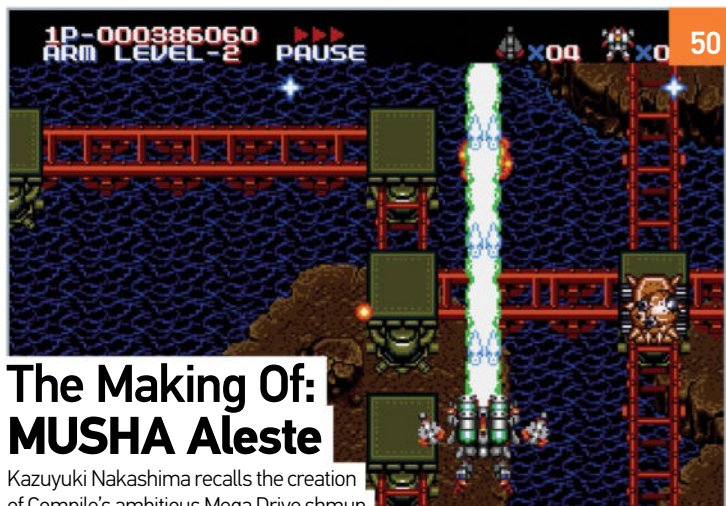
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The Making Of: MUSHA Aleste

Kazuyuki Nakashima recalls the creation of Compile's ambitious Mega Drive shmup





» [PC] Movement in *Onimusha 2* will be greatly refined, although you can still go back to the original 'tank controls' if you so wish to.

RETURNING TO ONIMUSHA 2

Motohide Eshiro on updating Capcom's supernatural sequel for contemporary systems

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The end of 2008 is finally here, but what does it mean for our intrepid traveller of time?

Despite being a huge success on the PlayStation 2, the *Onimusha* series has all but disappeared in recent years.

We'll be getting a brand-new game in the form of *Onimusha: Way Of The Sword* next year, but Capcom certainly hasn't been complacent and has just released a remaster of *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny*.

We were lucky enough to speak to Motohide Eshiro, who not

was creating a brand-new overhaul of *Onimusha* for new systems, it was keen for players to simply rediscover the original games (the first *Onimusha* was re-released in 2019). "We simply decided to continue that strategy, rather than going through the whole series and remaking each title in turn," Eshiro explains. "Because *Onimusha 2*, until this release, hasn't been playable on modern systems, that just felt like a better fit rather than

respect and bring the content of the original game, without going in and fiddling around with it," he begins. "I wanted to let people play the remaster and feel like they're getting the experience they might have had back in the early Noughties. However, at the same time, I think quality-of-life improvements are very important in these kinds of remasters and while the content can be just as it was back in the day, the game

“I wanted to let people play the remaster and feel like they're getting the experience they might have had back in the early Noughties”

MOTOHIDE ESHIRO

only directed the original game, but is also directing the remaster. Interestingly, while Capcom has been properly remaking its early *Resident Evil* games, it is going down the remaster route with the early *Onimusha* titles, meaning quality-of-life improvements and updated visuals rather than fully overworked gameplay mechanics. Eshiro tells us that as Capcom

going back and completely redoing the games from scratch.”

Although *Onimusha 2* will be familiar to fans that have already played it, Eshiro realises that it's not enough to simply re-release the original game. As a result he's been walking a tightrope in the hope of keeping stalwart fans and newcomers happy. "My approach was very much to

feel has to be brought in line with modern standards or else I think a lot of players will bounce off of it.”

As you'll probably imagine, the changes Eshiro is hinting at concern both how *Onimusha 2* plays and how it will look on new TVs. "You can still play using the classic tank controls if you want, but bringing new, more direct analogue input controls



» [PC] It's unclear if all the earlier *Onimusha* games will be remade, but the next one would require a fair bit of licensing wrangling.



» [PC] While the visuals haven't been vastly overhauled, they have been updated to look nicer on modern TV sets.

is one fundamental barrier to entry that I think we can remove in a remaster like this," Eshiro continues. "Bringing the resolution up to standard so that it looks great on modern TVs and systems is another, and just a few more comfort features that people now expect, like being able to skip cutscenes if they want to." Autosaves are another addition Eshiro mentions and ultimately he feels the game is, "Essentially, almost exactly the same as the original game, while letting it become a more comfortable experience for the modern game player."

Although *Onimusha 2* was a PS2 exclusive back in the day. The remaster is heading to a number of systems, making



» Motohide Eshiro is the director of the original game and the remaster.



» Kosuke Tanaka is the producer of *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny*.



» [PC] We played through *Onimusha 2* only last year and it remains a great addition to the series.

us wonder if exclusives are no longer as important as they once were. Kosuke Tanaka who also joined our call and is acting as the game's producer told us, "We didn't really think of it in those terms, but ultimately Capcom as a company has a sort of strategy or an approach where we want to bring our games to as many players as possible. And that meant that for this remaster it just made sense to bring it to as many platforms as we could and let you play it regardless of your choice of system."

The new remaster hasn't been without its hurdles either, as Eshiro goes on to explain. "The biggest challenge was the fact that we are working in an engine. The original game was directly programmed as source code onto the system, while the remaster is working in our RE Engine. So our programming team had to fundamentally take the structure of the original game's code and reimplement it in an existing

engine. They were able to work closely with the system engineers and achieve it in a way that I think feels seamless and that players won't even notice the difference."

For all the difficulties Eshiro and his team have had bringing *Onimusha 2* to new systems, he feels like new players will still get plenty of enjoyment from the game. "The basic idea of being a sword-wielding samurai character from the [Edo] period probably isn't as unique as it was at the time, but I still feel that players picking this up for the first time are going to [enjoy] this blend of real Japanese historical settings and figures and historical events," he says. "I hope players realise, "Oh, you know what, there's actually still a lot this game has to say that's relevant and that you can't get in other games today." ★

The remaster of *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny* is out now for all major systems.

A VMU FOR YOU

If you still love Sega's Dreamcast, you may want to invest in 8BitMods' VMU Pro. In addition to offering unlimited storage and being compatible with original Dreamcast VMUs, the VMU Pro can also emulate a number of systems like the NES and Master System. 8BitMods promises that it will, "Change the way we think of the VMU." You can find out more and preorder the device by visiting 8bitmods.com



EARTHION INBOUND

Fans of Sega's Mega Drive will be well aware of the incoming shmup Yuzo Koshiro is working on. While it's being designed to run on an original console, it's also going to be heading to contemporary systems, including the PC, Switch, PS4, PS5 and Xbox Series S/X. Physical copies of the game will be handled by Limited Run Games. Needless to say, you can expect a review in an upcoming issue.



Who is Mike Mika?

Mike Mika's official videogame career began in the Nineties, working on Game Boy Color titles like *Klax* and *Alice In Wonderland*. He's now the studio head of Digital Eclipse, a studio acclaimed for its reverential treatment of classic games.

Blue light nights

In the Eighties, my parents worshipped at a fluorescent-lit temple called Kmart, a retail fever dream best known for its Blue Light Specials – a kind of flash-mob-inducing event where employees wheeled a blue-light-topped cart through the store like some sort of capitalist siren beckoning shoppers to deep discounts. Shoppers abandoned their pride, dignity, and children to chase it. My friend Derrick was once trampled during one of these ceremonies and came up clutching a bag of Tootsie Pops like a war hero. He still has a limp.

But while the adults fought over half-off tube-socks and popcorn balls, I drifted to the only sacred place that mattered: the Kmart Computer Center. A realm of buzzing CRTs and blinking cursors that beckoned awkward ten-year-olds like myself to type:

10 PRINT "ASS": GOTO 10

Then I'd run, giggling, to watch from a safe distance as some unsuspecting shopper encountered my crude programming masterpiece.

There were demo kiosks featuring all the futuristic machines of the era: the VIC-20, the TI-99/4A, and the Timex Sinclair 1000 – a ZX81 rebrand so modest it was later given away with furniture, as if to say, "Congratulations on your new loveseat. Here's a small plastic wedge to level it with." Also on display was the hottest new computer: the Commodore 64.

Nearby sat a rack of books no one ever bought—but I voraciously consumed them, especially Compute!'s *Creating Arcade Games On The Commodore 64*. While my parents were comparing laundry detergents, I'd type in lines of BASIC so feverishly I felt like I was hacking NORAD. It was intoxicating.

Then something miraculous happened: I started to understand what the commands meant. I



began to compose code from scratch. Even though the graphics were composed of PETSCII symbols, it worked. People watched. Someone said, "Hey, that's cool, kid!" Even my dad, who was hard to impress (after I let him down years before when I lost a high stakes big wheel race), was visibly impressed. He didn't say much – just gave a quiet nod.

It wasn't random that the first game I endeavoured to make was based on the arcade hit *Moon Patrol*. One day after work, my dad picked me up, and excitedly described this crazy new game with a killer soundtrack as we made our way to the mall arcade. We spent the evening bonding over shooting UFOs, jumping over pits, and eating food court French fries.

A week after the display of my coding prowess, he bought us a Commodore 64 using money secretly stashed for 'emergency stereo equipment' – a fund my mother never knew existed.

I still remember the smell of the warm beige plastic. Turning it on bathed the room in that iconic blue light projected from the startup screen. We had a Koala Pad, the tablet interface of its time, and my friend and I drew what we believe – to this day – was the most accurate pixel-art Conan The Barbarian ever rendered. Like Klimt's Philosophy, ours was tragically lost – not in a Nazi fire, but to a tape-deck compatibility snafu.

Despite that setback, I soon had the balloon sprite from the C64 manual doing unholy things: firing lasers at monuments, dodging and blowing up asteroids, flying over and destroying *Q*bert*-inspired Escher hellscapes. Those first few weeks, I was a sorcerer.

Every time I turned on the C64, the screen greeted me with one word: READY. I didn't know it then, but I was – and that blinking cursor of limitless possibilities, floating in a sea of blue light, would change my life forever. ✨

“I'd type in lines of BASIC so feverishly I felt like I was hacking NORAD”

Do you agree with Mike's thoughts? Contact us at:

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MOUSE SUPPORT HITS THE EVERCADE

» Mouse support isn't the only good news for Evercade fans, as the Namco carts now work on the VS as well.



BLAZE ENTERTAINMENT OFFERS AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO PLAY CLASSIC GAMES

It was recently announced that a brand-new update offering mouse support for a number of games was heading to Evercade systems.

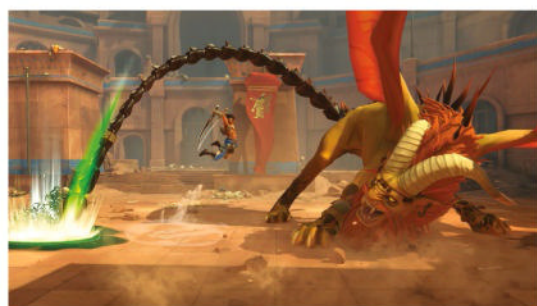
The titles included are Z from *The Bitmap Brothers Collection 2*, *Broken Sword 1* and *2* from the *Broken Sword Collection*, *Arcade Pool* from *Team17 Collection 1* and *Future Wars* and *Operation Stealth*, which both appear on *Delphine Software Collection 1*. The support itself is currently a beta feature, and works with all of Blaze's non-portable systems, which means the Evercade VS, VS-R and Alpha all benefit from it.

Additionally, Blaze has also revealed that it is experimenting with paddle controls for certain Atari 2600 games. Games currently supported include *Night Driver* and *Steeplechase* from *Atari Collection 1* and *Demons To Diamonds* and *Street Racer* from *Atari Collection 2*. All the mentioned games will highlight if mouse support is an option (you'll need to update of course) and your mouse simply connects to a USB port (port 2 on the Alpha and ports 2-4 on the VS and VS-R).

Hopefully trackball support will be next. That's not all, though. The recent Easter update also finally makes *Namco Museum Collection 1* and *2* finally playable on all non-portable Evercade systems. Nice work, Blaze.



» [Evercade] You can now control George Stobbart's Evercade adventures with a mouse.



» [PC] *The Lost Crown* is an incredible adventure. We can't wait to see what develops.



» [PC] After cancelling the planned sequel it sounds like Ubisoft has had a change of heart.

RETURN OF THE PRINCE?

UBISOFT HINTS THAT ITS CLASSIC IP COULD BE MAKING A COMEBACK

Prince Of Persia: *The Lost Crown* is not only one of the best games in the series, but arguably one of the best *Metroidvanias* out there. Disappointing sales saw Ubisoft shuttering the planned sequel though and that appeared to be the end of the road for the poor prince. Now though, it appears that Ubisoft may have had a change of heart. A recent post on Twitter on the official *Prince Of Persia* account revealed the following statement. "Well over

2M players by now. You've revived the legend. The Prince is back, and believe us – he's just warming up." But what does it mean though? Is Ubisoft reassembling the original team which did such great work on the original? Is the studio simply referring to the *Sands Of Time* remake that's been languishing in development hell for ages? We're not too sure, but seeing that *The Lost Crown* is one of the best modern games we've played in recent years we're hoping it gets the sequel it deserves.

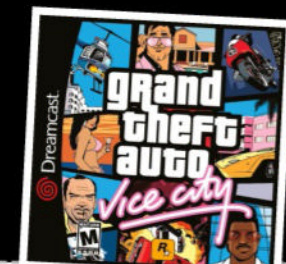
CAPCOM HITS GOG

GOG's partnership with Capcom is certainly proving successful. After adding the first three *Resident Evil* games to its new Preservation Program, it followed those classics with *Dino Crisis 1* and *2*. The latest game to appear is the popular RPG *Breath Of Fire IV*. As usual it's compatible with Windows 10 and 11 has numerous new rendering options, improved controller support and much more. It's available at gog.com for £8.99.



DREAMCAST VICE

Not content with converting *Grand Theft Auto III* to Sega's Dreamcast, the same team led by developer Stefanos Kornilos Mitsis Poiitidis (skmp) has now released *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. Revealed on 1 April, it offers numerous enhancements over the PS2 version thanks to various mods and once again highlights the capabilities of Sega's long-dead console. Rockstar has been strangely silent about these releases, so here's hoping they don't disappear anytime soon.



Who is Iain Lee?

Iain Lee is a freelance counsellor who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. You can get more information about Iain by visiting iainleecounselling.com or heading over to patreon.com/iainandKatherine



Car booty



used to be obsessed with car boot sales.

From a very young age I would enjoy either trawling through them looking for stuff or even selling when I was about 17. I get the love for tat from my dad. Now long since gone, my dad was obsessed with, well, crap. He worked in the props department at the BBC which meant all manner of treasures would be brought home. My Grifter used to belong to *Grange Hill*'s Pogo Patterson and we once had a Dalek in our lock up.

Our Sundays regularly involved trips to antique fairs, junk shops and if we were really lucky, a visit to the local tip. This was back in the glorious days of landfill before woke took over and we had to be responsible for sustaining the planet or something! I don't know if you were actually allowed to but we would stride across the huge piles of trash, scaring gulls off and scanning for treasures. We once found a beautiful accordion still in its case. Marvellous times indeed.

As I got older, I carried on the tradition of getting stuff just because it was there. I think my greatest ever find was in 1996 at a car boot near Wood Green. Someone was selling an entire BBC Micro setup. As well as the machine you got shed loads of tapes, joysticks and even a double Cumana disk drive. I had always coveted these as a kid and there was absolutely no way my parents could afford it.

How much was this haul you ask? A tenner. Amazing right? Ten quid, the lot.

The catch was I lived miles away, I didn't drive, and all the guy had to put this stuff in was a black bin bag. These were

mere problems. Dad would have pushed through and there was no way I was leaving this stuff behind.

I found out pretty quickly that I was in trouble. The stuff was HEAVY and the bin bag was wafer thin. Before I'd even reached the exit of the car boot, it was starting to split and cables and corners were spilling out. I did my very best to make it to the bus stop but the bag didn't hold. It completely fell apart and my goodies fell to the floor. I could see the bus stop about 100 yards away. I picked up what I could, took a deep breath and walked halfway. I then put that on the pavement, went back, grabbed the rest and carried it to the bus stop. I dashed back for the first pile and made it to the stop just in time to get the 121 home.

No one helped me on the bus with the stuff, no one helped me off. Broken Britain indeed. It was an even longer walk home once I had finally disembarked, but using my excellent method, I made it. And you know what? None of the stuff even worked.

Jokes. It did, it all worked perfectly. I still consider that my greatest ever haul and it breaks my heart I will probably never get a deal as good as that again. *

“As I got older, I carried on the tradition of getting stuff just because it was there”

Do you agree with Iain's thoughts? Contact us at:

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Who is Paul Rose?

Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Finding your game



Something I never imagined when I was growing up a gamer was how ubiquitous games would become.

Back in the Eighties, they were niche – yes, pretty much all my mates played games, but it was never a hobby that spread beyond that.

The turning point was the Game Boy – the fact my mother bought one after playing *Tetris* on mine was a real watershed. The Game Boy fixation spread through my family until other relatives started buying Game Boys. Again, just to play *Tetris*. They had no interest in *Super Mario Land*, or *Faceball 2000*. It was all about them blocks.

My kids were never massively into games, but they did play them. When they were very little they would all come and sit on my lap and watch as I played. I once got given a stack of educational titles through working on *Digitiser*, and they endlessly played and replayed *Putt-Putt Travels Through Time* and *Freddi Fish*.

However, none of them could really be considered gamers. My son is probably the closest out of all of them – being autistic and something of a geek, he could name pretty much every *Pokémon* from a very early age. He still plays every new *Pokémon* game, plus the occasional obscure Japanese RPG, and he bought a retro handheld for a recent trip to Japan – but that's about it.

What's interesting with the other two is how they both had 'their' game. My eldest was obsessed with *The Sims*, and – until she had kids of her own a couple of years ago – still played it into adulthood. And my youngest was weirdly fanatical about *Spyro The Dragon* and – randomly – *Marble Blast Ultra* on the Xbox 360. She managed to get hold of a PlayStation recently, just to play the former.

We're in a family WhatsApp group, and the two youngest were recently in there reminiscing about some *Hamtaro* game I didn't even remember them playing.

I guess they're all, in their own way, retro gamers – just in a very, very limited fashion. Even my eldest daughter's husband only ever plays one of the *FIFAs*. Don't ask me which one, but he only owns a PS3, so I know it's not one of the recent ones.

I guess for all of them they're experiencing the same thing the rest of us do when we play the games we grew up with; that warm, comforting, feeling of nostalgia. Those familiar graphics and sounds, and the gameplay loops. With our world feeling more unstable and uncertain than ever, there's something to be said for clinging to those touchstones which ground us.

I've never been disappointed that my kids didn't become big gamers. Rather, it gives me joy that they've all found their game – and you can be sure that even when they grow old, like I am at a terrifying rate, those games will still be with them, still giving them comfort, like a security blanket.

Basically, it would seem you don't have to be a retro gamer to be a retro gamer. ★



“With our world feeling more unstable and uncertain than ever, there's something to be said for clinging to those touchstones which ground us”

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK



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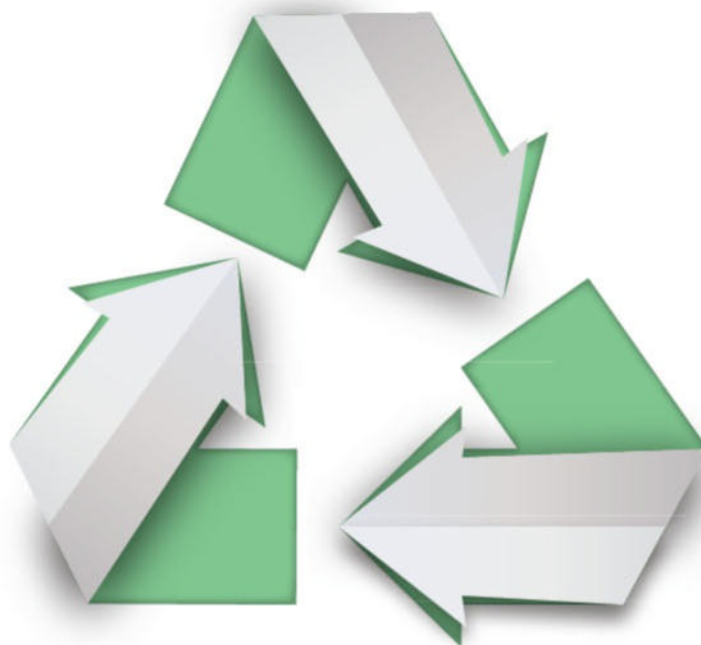


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Sources: Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI), 2020 and Eurostat, 2018.
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» [PC] Just your usual Nineties bedroom, complete with a Rubik's Cube and Phony Talkman.



» Mark Robinson is the designer of Axyz and recently won Best Upcoming Game at the IMIRT Irish Game Awards.

Axyz

Mark Robinson tells us about his new take on the PlayStation cult hit *Kula World*

If you've taken a look at the Axyz screenshots adorning this spread, you'll notice a striking similarity to the excellent puzzler *Kula World*.

Mark Robinson chats with Nick Thorpe about the game's inception and how it's definitely not a *Super Money Ball* clone.

So Mark, how did you get into game development?

During the pandemic I did a part-time diploma course in game design here in Dublin, because I needed to do something and not lose my fucking mind like everyone

else. [...] I was then made redundant, and a friend of mine (who also worked in the same company) was made redundant six months later. He was like, 'Look, you've always wanted to make a game, why don't you just make a game then?' So I was like, 'OK, why don't I just make a game then?' That was around the end of 2022, the start of 2023.

So Axyz, obviously, takes a lot of inspiration from *Kula World*. How did you first encounter the game?

Oh, like everyone else, I had the

demo disc back in like 97/98. [...] It was this weird, ethereal, somewhat kind of menacing, for reasons I can't explain, kind of like a puzzle game. And then it wouldn't be till years and years later that when I started getting into emulation, I was like, 'Son of a bitch. I've never played like, you know, *Kula World* from beginning to end.' So I immediately went and did that, and now I have a copy on my Steam Deck at all times, and I have a physical copy of the Japanese release on my shelf as well.

What have you done to set Axyz apart from its inspiration?

I'd always liked the idea of doing a spiritual successor to *Kula*

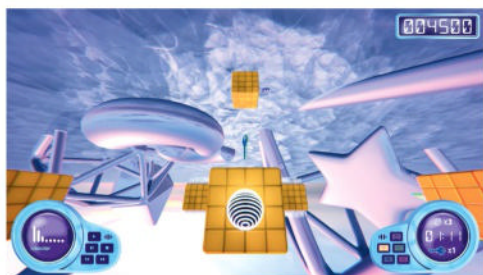
“We might be nominated for even more awards next year”

MARK ROBINSON

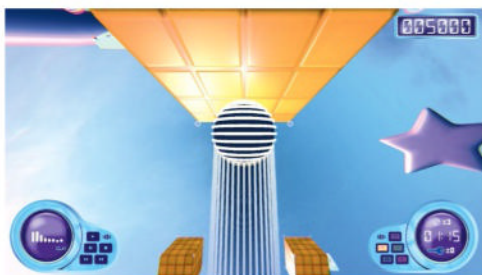
World. And certainly over the last couple of years, we've seen a whole bunch of Playstation/PS2 era spiritual successors, whether it's *Signalis* or *Bug Fables*. [...] The gravity switch is the big thing [in Axyz]. I certainly didn't think about it at the time, but it does change up a lot of the way that some of the mechanics and puzzle elements work.

How long did the game take and how many staff were on it?

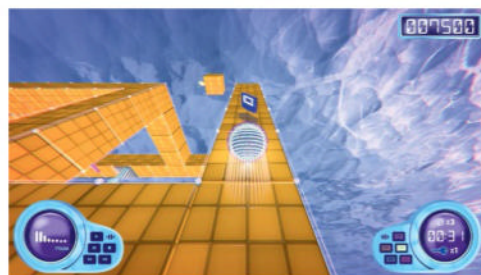
It was 18 months and there



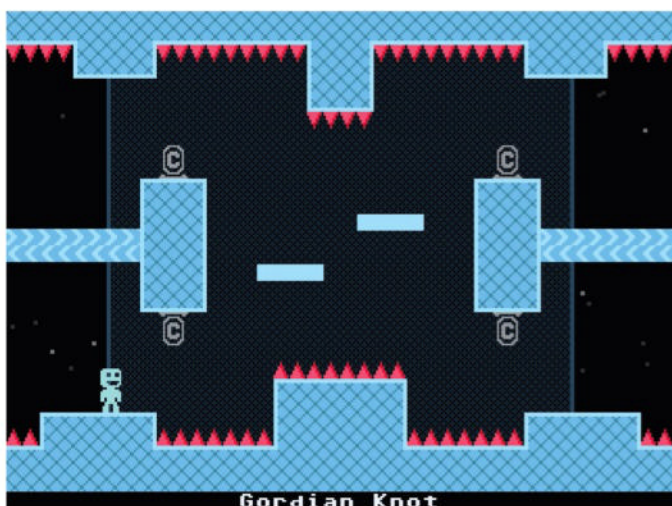
» [PC] Although *Axyz* is only currently available on Steam, Mark is hoping to release it elsewhere, including Itch and the Switch.



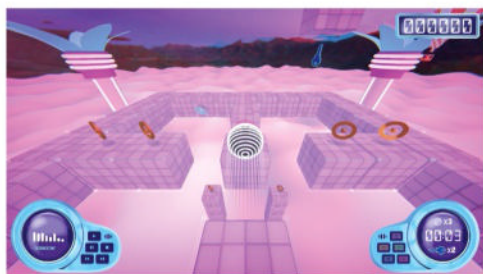
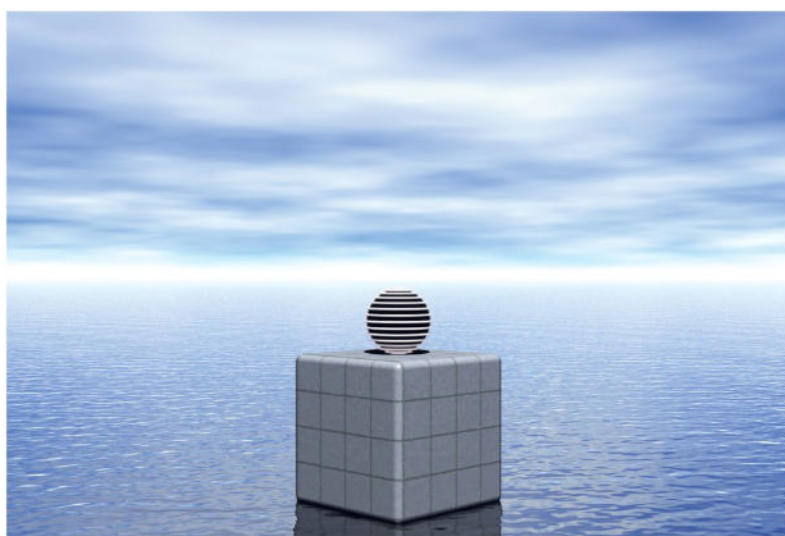
» [PC] *Axyz* separates itself from *Kula World* thanks to its ability to switch gravity.



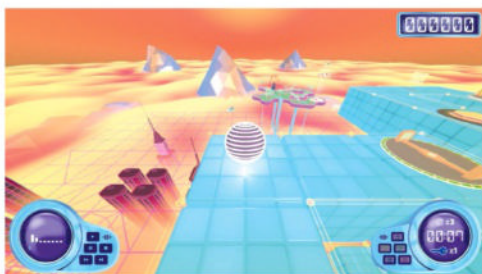
» [PC] Grabbing that cassette tape will help you to unlock bonus stages.



» [PC] Mark mentions that Terry Cavanagh's *VVVVVV* was another big inspiration.



» [PC] Alongside *Kula World*, Mark states that players have seen similarities to *Marble Blast* and *Super Monkey Ball* in *Axyz*.



» [PC] One notable aspect of *Axyz* we enjoy is its stylised aesthetics, which give the game a distinctive, dream-like quality.



» [PC] You'll receive a nice overview of a level before you have to tackle it.

are two of us, myself and Jon Aykroyd. We are both the cofounders. I'm lead design, he's lead programmer. Towards the end of the project, we had an incredible sound designer called Laura Ryder, who's also based here in Ireland. We also had an artist come on for the last three months called Breogann Hackett, who has worked on a couple of Irish games before. [...] I then had another friend come on just to help, like, finish some of the UI and whatnot. So by the end, there were five of us. Add in [localisation] and I'd say about 15 people or so have probably touched hands on the project in some form or fashion.

One of the things we noticed about the sound design that was really neat was that when you use rewind, the tape gradually degrades.

I really appreciate the fact that you spotted that. [...] There was an early version of that where it was way too abrasive and it just kind of ruined the track. I appreciate that you noticed that. We've tried to do a couple of things with diegetic design, in both terms of the visuals and the sound.

How will people respond to *Axyz* if they don't have the reference point of *Kula World*?

They'll look for another reference point. And that's the thing. So

many people will be like, 'Oh yeah, it reminds me of *Marble Blast*,' but I've never played *Marble Blast* before. The biggest one that always happens is people sit down and they're like, 'Oh, this is going to play like, *Super Monkey Ball*.' And the moment they make that first bit of movement they're like, 'Oh, this is nothing like *Super Monkey Ball*.' That one always cracks me up.

We saw you won an award at the Irish Game Awards. That must be exciting.

It definitely kind of validated the work that we've done, or added an extra level of validation. I'm really proud of the fact that we're an

Irish studio. [...] To be recognised by the Irish Game Awards, and knowing that that was just for Best Upcoming Game, means that we might be nominated for even more awards next year.

So the game's out now on Steam. Is it available elsewhere on PC at the moment?

No, we're working on getting it available on Itch, and we're looking at a couple of other platforms as well. There are some difficulties I'm having with those in areas that I won't get into, but yeah, the plan, at minimum, it should be on Itch and maybe GOG. We would love to get it onto the Switch as well. ★

BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES

DECEMBER 2008 – Tired of scavenging through devastated town centres, players turned to *Fallout 3* to... oh. Also, the Locust Horde returned and *World War II* got an anime makeover. Nick Thorpe is once again guarding the keys to the DeLorean



NEWS DECEMBER 2008

With economic turmoil continuing, major retailers began to collapse. On 18

December, Woolworths announced that its 807 UK stores would close by 5 January, with 27,000 jobs lost. The following day, furniture retailer MFI ceased trading, with 111 stores closed and 1,400 employees made redundant. Zavvi then, went into administration on 24 December.

On 11 December, former Nasdaq stock exchange chairman Bernie Madoff was arrested on a charge of securities fraud, relating to his asset management business. Madoff's sons Mark and Andrew had revealed to authorities that the business was essentially a multi-billion dollar Ponzi scheme – the largest in history. He pleaded guilty to 11 federal felonies in March 2009 and was sentenced to 150 years in prison in June, serving 12 years before passing away in 2021.

During a joint press conference with Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki in Baghdad on 14 December, outgoing US president George W Bush ducked two shoes thrown by Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zaidi. In March 2009, al-Zaidi was convicted of assaulting a foreign leader, but his three-year prison sentence was reduced to one year in April, and he was released after serving nine months.



» [Xbox 360] Sometimes, you just gotta love angry gunmen shooting up all the weird creatures.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 2008

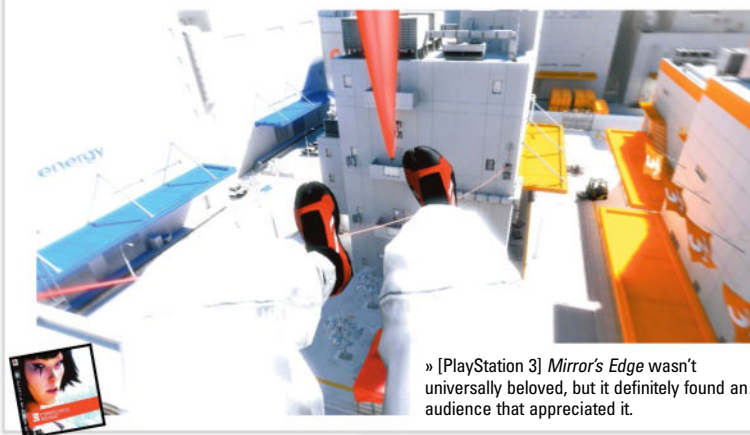
If there's one thing you can guarantee when Christmas rolls around, it's a slew of dependable cross-platform franchise games, and sure enough that's what we got in 2008. *WWE Smackdown! Vs Raw 2009*, *Tomb Raider: Underworld*, *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3* and *Midnight Club: Los Angeles* clocked in and received scores around the 8/10 mark. *Call Of Duty: World At War* largely did the same, though some dissent

began to emerge – *Edge* described it as “WWII on amphetamines” in a 6/10 review, and *Play's* 68% review criticised the “shamelessly crass tone” of the game.

Guitar Hero: World Tour added drums to keep with *Rock Band*, while *Rock Band 2* allowed players to import songs from the previous game. Over on the Wii, *Animal Crossing: Let's Go To The City* served as a dependable exclusive franchise game. *Fallout 3* was the big multiplatform game of

the month, reinventing the post-apocalyptic RPG series in 3D form. The game earned 10/10 from both *games™* and *Total PC Gaming*, 5/5 from 360, 97% from *Play*, 9/10 from *Official PlayStation Magazine* and 7/10 from *Edge*, on top of previous scores of 90% in *PC Gamer* and 9/10 in *Official Xbox 360 Magazine*. *Edge* felt that the game was “disappointing in its lack of finesse”, but noted that “submersion in this world means that you quickly look past the many frustrations” and its praise for the “deep, inventive missions which eschew the usual fetch and kill structure” echoed other critics.

Also launching on the HD consoles was *Mirror's Edge*, DICE's unusual first-person action game that placed an emphasis on escaping enemies using parkour, rather than engaging in gunplay. “When you know where you're going the flow carries you along and there are thrills at every turn. When you're struggling, falling and dying constantly, the buzz ends and frustration can



» [PlayStation 3] *Mirror's Edge* wasn't universally beloved, but it definitely found an audience that appreciated it.

take a hold," said *games™* in an 8/10 review, which noted that it would reward repeat players. *Edge's* review described a "failure to capture anything of what popularised parkour to begin with", complaining of a lack of freedom, "sustained momentum" and "any real sense of verticality", and awarding it 5/10. Those scores joined a 4/5 from 360, 71% from *Play*, 7/10 from *OXM* and a 9/10 exclusive review in *OPM* last month.

The top-scoring platform exclusive of the month was *Gears Of War 2*, with scores of 10/10 from X360, 5/5 from 360 and 9/10 each from *games™* and *Edge* adding to *OXM's* exclusive 9/10 review from last month. "While everything has been noticeably improved in *Gears 2*, it's ultimately the small changes that make the biggest difference," said X360, citing gameplay that felt "much tighter than before". The month's other big Xbox 360 exclusive was *Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts*, an unusual title that tasked the platform stars with scavenging parts and building vehicles. 360 felt that its "mix of *Scrapheap Challenge* and *The Crystal Maze* is extraordinarily addictive", and

» [PC] Hey, it's the VATS system that lets you shoot individual limbs and such – a neat inclusion for *Fallout 3*.



» [Xbox 360] *Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts* wasn't a bad game, but it wasn't what fans expected or really wanted.

gave it 5/5. *Edge* awarded it 7/10, feeling that it was "a clever, colourful and witty game" that suffered from "stodgy tutorials, flabby interfaces and a host of loading screens". The game also scored 8/10 in *games™* and *OXM*.

FPS sequel *Resistance 2* represented Sony's last big push for the festive spend, and scored 90% in *Play*, 8/10 in *games™* and 6/10 in *Edge*, adding to *OPM's* exclusive 9/10 review last month. While *games™* felt that the co-op "sadly doesn't match that of *Halo 3*", it praised it as "a far more visceral fight than the original" and "probably the first time the PlayStation 3 has a AAA action exclusive to be proud of". Also exclusive to PS3 was Sega's *Valkyria Chronicles*, a tactical RPG



» [PlayStation 3] Don't worry, Alicia here will be alright – she has the power of friendship, after all.

in a World War II-inspired anime setting. Despite a "trite" plot, *Play* felt that the game's mixture of turn-based and real-time action was "a very accessible and simple concept, yet it lends itself to a deep strategy game", and awarded it 82%. *Edge* gave it 7/10, adding to scores of 9/10 in *games™* and 8/10 in *OPM* last month.

Finally, Nintendo DS owners were treated to *Professor Layton And The Curious Village*, a puzzle game that *nRevolution* felt was "excellently quirky" and offered a "lovely art style" – enough for a 9/10 review to join *Official Nintendo Magazine's* 92% from last month.

Join us again next month for 2009, which is 2008's New Game Plus mode. ★



» [PlayStation 3] Sometimes, you just gotta love angry gunmen shooting up all the weird creatures. [Again? – Ed.]

CHARTS

DECEMBER 2008

PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 – *FIFA 09* (EA)
- 2 – *Lego Batman* (Warner Bros)
- 3 – *Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway* (Ubisoft)
- 4 – *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed* (LucasArts)
- 5 – *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09* (EA)



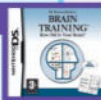
PC

- 1 – *Far Cry 2* (Ubisoft)
- 2 – *Spore* (EA)
- 3 – *Dead Space* (EA)
- 4 – *Pro Evolution Soccer 2009* (Konami)
- 5 – *The Sims 2: Apartment Life* (EA)



DS

- 1 – *Dr Kawashima's Brain Training* (Nintendo)
- 2 – *Lego Batman* (Warner Bros)
- 3 – *Mario Kart DS* (Nintendo)
- 4 – *More Touchmaster* (Midway)
- 5 – *High School Musical 3: Senior Year* (Disney)



MUSIC

- 1 – *Hallelujah* (Alexandra Burke)
- 2 – *Hallelujah* (Jeff Buckley)
- 3 – *Run* (Leona Lewis)
- 4 – *If I Were A Boy* (Beyoncé)
- 5 – *Once Upon A Christmas Song* (Geraldine)



THIS MONTH IN...



games™

The retro section celebrates the Dreamcast's tenth anniversary this month. There's a year-by-year retrospective, a feature on homebrew games and another arguing that the Wii is the console's natural successor.



Official Xbox 360 Magazine

"Titles dumped after the Activision Blizzard merger are snapped up by other game publishers," reports the mag. Atari snagged *Ghostbusters* and THQ took *50 Cent: Blood In The Sand*, but *Brutal Legend* remains homeless.



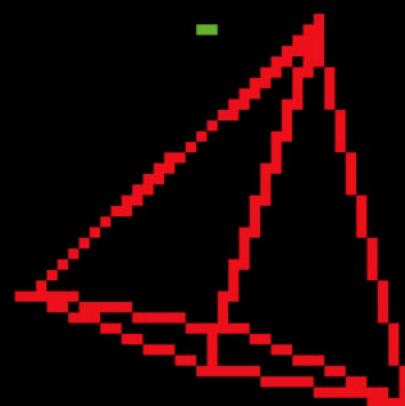
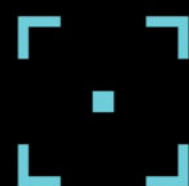
Play

Console fanboys review bombed *LittleBigPlanet* and *Gears Of War 2* in a tit-for-tat war on Metacritic. "This is the first true concerted effort to 'stuff the ballot box' in the games section," said site cofounder Marc Doyle.

880

317

N



201

Starglider

WHO NEEDS STAR WARS?

» RETROREVIVAL



» AMSTRAD CPC » 1987 » REALTIME GAMES SOFTWARE
I'm obviously getting old now, but I'm pretty sure that my first experience with *Starglider* was seeing it on the TV show *Get Mucky* in 1986, which was co-hosted by Gilbert The Alien. Granted, I knew it

existed thanks to reading various reviews in multiformat magazines at the time, but seeing a game in motion is often very different to how it looks in screenshots.

It didn't help that *Get Mucky* featured the original Atari ST version of the game, which according to the one person I knew with the machine, "was better than the arcade version of *Star Wars*". I didn't believe him of course, but I could see that the 16-bit game was very slick and I was convinced that my poor old Amstrad CPC wouldn't be up to the task of playing it, or if it would even come out on my beloved system. I was delighted to be proven wrong on both counts.

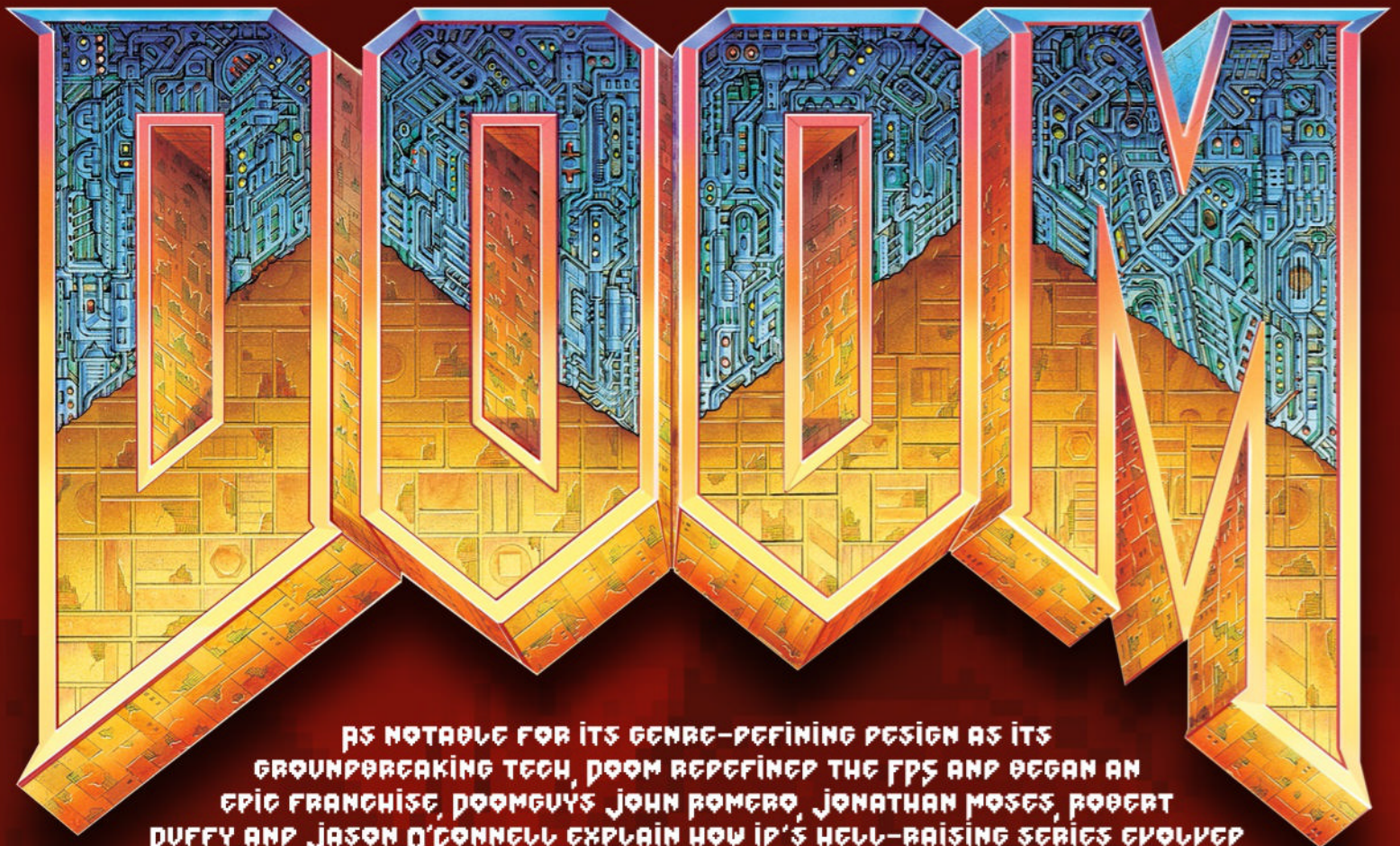
Starglider on the CPC is quite simply great fun. Is it as good as the Atari ST original? Of course not, but it remains an astonishing conversion that would make for a great Conversion Kings feature at some point. According to cpc-power.com Graeme Baird and Ian Oliver were on coding duties, and what a fantastic job they did. Yes, it's showing its age a little now, but it still feels nice and fluid to play and its wireframe visuals still manage to look striking.

I always preferred it to Domark's conversion of *Star Wars* back in the day, and that still holds true now. And besides, if you squint a little bit and use some imagination you could almost argue it's a lost version of the *Star Wars* game anyway, it's so polished and satisfying to play, with little hints to the classic Atari game peppered throughout.

It's worth noting though, that as impressive as the Amstrad CPC version of *Starglider* is, the ZX Spectrum version is that little bit better to play (what it lacks in colour, it makes up for in its overall speed) so play that one as well if you can. Still, there's no denying that *Starglider* on the Amstrad CPC is a cracking conversion and deserving of the many accolades that were thrust upon it. ★



THE EVOLUTION OF



AS NOTABLE FOR ITS GENRE-DEFINING DESIGN AS ITS GROUNDBREAKING TECH, DOOM REDEFINED THE FPS AND BEGAN AN EPIC FRANCHISE. DOOMGUYS JOHN ROMERO, JONATHAN MOSES, ROBERT DUFFY AND JASON O'CONNELL EXPLAIN HOW IP'S HELL-RAISING SERIES EVOLVED

WORDS BY RORY MILNE



■ During his id days John Romero revolutionised the FPS with titles like *Doom* and *Doom II*. He now runs Romero Games.



■ Jonathan Moses produced *Doom 3* for Activision. He is now director, games partnerships at OneTeam Partners.

There's a certain symmetry to the fact that a game as influential as id Software's first-person shooter *Doom* took influence from a number of sources itself. In terms of tech and gameplay, *Doom* owed much to the long line of FPS titles that id had created previously. This lineage arguably began with the 1991 release of *Hovortank One*, even if its hero drove a tank rather than being on foot. It certainly included id's spell-casting fantasy from the same year *Catacombs 3-D* and the studio's 1992 Nazi-battling shooter *Wolfenstein 3D*.

In terms of *Doom*'s theme, objectives and coolest weapon, id looked to its epic RPG sessions and to the silver screen, as *Doom* designer John Romero explains. "*Catacombs 3-D* was basically the first FPS, then with *Wolfenstein 3D* we added weapons," John remembers. "So with *Doom*, *Wolfenstein 3D* was our baseline, but there were so

"WITH DOOM, WOLFENSTEIN 3D WAS OUR BASELINE, BUT THERE WERE SO MANY MASSIVE LEAPS. NOT LEAST THAT DOOM'S WORLD CHANGED WHAT GAMES LOOKED LIKE FROM THEN ON"

JOHN ROMERO



many massive leaps. Not least that *Doom*'s world changed what games looked like from then on. You went into space and found Hell instead of aliens; the idea of overrunning a space base with demons was from our *D&D* campaign. That hoard of demons coming at you from all over the place was from *Aliens*, and then the shotgun came from *Evil Dead II*."

Far from being *Doom*'s only weapon, its shotgun was just one of many swappable armaments that could be found in the game. These sat on a sliding scale that reflected how much damage they could do, with the most effective option being perhaps the least likely one, as John points out. "The weapon balance was really important; we wanted a design that valued every single weapon," John considers. "We wanted to have visceral kills, we wanted blood and explosions, so we stuck to conventional weapons. You used your fists as a last resort, so then why not power them up with a



■ *Doom 3* lead coder Robert Duffy also worked on many subsequent *Doom* releases. He left the games industry in 2024.



■ Saber Interactive's Jason O'Connell defined the missions for the 2016 reboot of *Doom* and the levels in *Doom Eternal* while working at id.



» [PC] Despite their thematic and stylistic differences, *Wolfenstein 3D* laid the foundations for *Doom*.



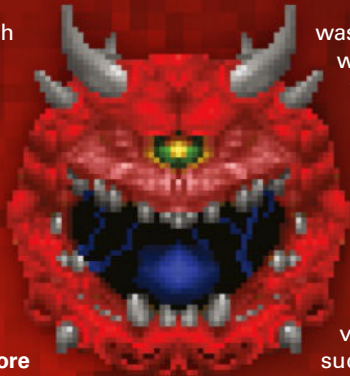
» [PC] There's very little that's more satisfying than taking opponents out in *Doom* with the shotgun.



» [PC] As tough as the typical monsters are in *Doom* they're nothing compared to the bosses you encounter.

Berzerk? It changed the punch from the weakest hit into the hardest hit. The goal was survival, if you wanted to you could 100% the levels, but getting to the exit was more important than killing everything."

This single-player objective was tweaked for another of *Doom*'s modes, more specifically its deathmatches, a term coined by John to describe a multiplayer experience where players killed each other's space marines over and over again. But while multiplayer was always intended for *Doom*, it ended up as a last-minute addition. "We knew when we were planning *Doom* that we needed multiplayer in there. Then when it was, the first thing we did was shoot each other, even though it was supposed to be co-op!" John exclaims. "Not once did we think that we needed to make deathmatch-only levels. We didn't have time. We actually forgot about multiplayer until October 1993, and *Doom*



was due out that December. The word deathmatch, well I just thought that since it was a match to the death why not call it a deathmatch?"

Adopting the shareware model, *Doom* was released as three episodes in 1993, with the first being free to download and the others being sold via mail order. The massive success of *Doom*'s three episodes guaranteed a sequel, but *Doom II* would be released as a single product at retail. "We weren't trying to market three episodes; we were selling *Doom II*, so there was no reason why we should have that separation," John reasons. "But we put intermissions in because we wanted to give the player a break and a bit of narrative. Those didn't change anything, they just meant that a level ended and then a new one started with the same items. So you got to go longer with the weapons, but the enemies got harder, so you kind of needed to keep your weapons."

STAGES OF EVOLUTION: 1995-2005

MASTER LEVELS FOR DOOM II (1995)

A response to other firms selling CDs of *Doom* content from the internet, *Master Levels* boasts 21 stages designed by authors contracted by id. It also includes *Maximum Doom*, a huge collection of amateur *Doom* files that were available online.



THE ULTIMATE DOOM (1995)

Essentially a retail version of *Doom* that collects the original shareware episode plus the two episodes that were sold via mail order. What sets *Ultimate Doom* apart is that it includes an exclusive fourth episode called *Thy Flesh Consumed*.



FINAL DOOM (1996)

Intended to be freeware but published by id instead, *Final Doom* incorporates two 32-level episodes: *TNT: Evilution* and *The Plutonia Experiment*. Created by hobbyists TeamTNT, *Final Doom* has the same weapons, items and creatures as *Doom II*.



DOOM 3: RESURRECTION OF EVIL (2005)

Technically a *Doom 3* expansion pack, *Resurrection Of Evil* has so much new content and so many new features that it's pretty much a sequel. It introduces four core monsters and the Artefact, which slows everything down except for the hero.



» [PC] Lock and key puzzles are a big part of *Doom*, and as well as adding challenge, they encourage exploration.



STAGES OF EVOLUTION: 2005-2012

DOOM RPG (2005)

The first of two mobile RPGs that were coded by *Doom* legend John Carmack, *Doom RPG* impressively adapts *Doom*'s frantic FPS action into measured turn-based gameplay. Depth is added by interactions with NPCs and accessing computer terminals.



DOOM RESURRECTION (2009)

This stylish rail shooter was designed by John Carmack around the limits of iOS devices available at the time of its development. *Resurrection* uses assets that were created for *Doom 3*, such as characters and art.



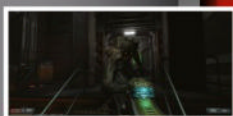
DOOM II: NO REST FOR THE LIVING (2010)

An expansion made for the XBLA *Doom II, No Rest For The Living* features hardcore gameplay and a wealth of secrets. There are more foes on-screen at any given time than the PC *Doom II* and ammo is limited, and there's a hidden level to find as well.



DOOM 3: BFG EDITION (2012)

Released years after *Doom 3*, this is an enhanced version of the PC hit with added extras. Besides better visuals, sound and effects, it includes a new episode called The Lost Mission and old favourites like Thy Flesh Consumed.



» [PC] There is just as much exploration to do in *Doom II* as the original, with some of the items you need being particularly tough to find.



» [PC] The double-barrelled sawn-off Super Shotgun first appeared in *Doom II* and can inflict serious damage.

► *Doom II*'s tough new opponents mirrored the original game's proven combination of cursed soldiers and their demonic masters, with one of those being a less daunting variant of *Doom*'s most challenging boss. *Doom II*'s stages benefitted equally from these new foes and the experience of the sequel's developers. "*Doom* had possessed marines, so why not make another that used the chaingun?" John reflects. "The other new enemies needed to be demons and they needed to be bigger. Like the Arch-vile, and the Revenant with its punch and heat-seeking rockets. We felt a slightly weaker Baron From Hell would be cool, so we changed his colours and made him the Hell Knight. Then those new enemies made the levels really fun. The world also had to look cooler, because after making *Doom* we now knew how to make levels!"



» [PC] Nightmarish horrors such as the skull-headed Revenants were first introduced in *Doom II*.

"THE OBVIOUS EXTRA WEAPON WAS THE DOUBLE-BARRELLED SHOTGUN. WE THOUGHT WHY NOT HAVE A WEAPON THAT CAUSED REALLY DEVASTATING DAMAGE IF YOU WERE UP-CLOSE?"

JOHN ROMERO

To complement its fun levels, and to balance *Doom II*'s unforgiving foes, the follow-up was given a weapon capable of dealing serious damage at close range to go with the long-range armaments returning from *Doom*. Additional help came in the form of a power-up that boosted players' health and armour. "The obvious extra weapon was the double-barrelled shotgun," John notes. "We thought why not have a weapon that caused really devastating damage if you were up-close? It was so that you could get face-to-face with the enemies, especially the new ones, because they had a lot more health. We created the MegaspHERE by combining two things from *Doom*. We put the Blue Armour and Soulsphere into one item called the MegaspHERE. MegaspHERes were really



» [PC] In *Doom II* there are matter transporters that are supernatural in nature rather than technology based.



» [Nintendo 64] As with its predecessors, you get a chainsaw in *Doom 64*, but this one is double-bladed!



» [N64] The Zombiemen in *Doom 64* are undead space marines who, unfortunately for you, have retained their combat training.

fun for deathmatches particularly, but they were also cool to have in levels."

When *Doom II* hit shop shelves in 1994, the superior sequel easily outsold its mail order predecessor. Various console adaptations of *Doom* followed, but the version that graced the N64 was given an original design and a new weapon thanks to its developer Midway Games and id, which supervised and provided concepts. "The Unmaker in *Doom 64* was from the original design for *Doom* that Tom Hall created before we started working on the game," John recalls. "It was a demonic hand taken from a demon that you would have used as a weapon against other demons. For *Doom 64*, Midway tied the unlocking of its powers to finding

artefacts. There was also a captain's hand in the original design that was going to be used as a key to open up a door. That was eventually used in [the reboot of] *Doom*."

Long before *Doom*'s reboot, a decision was made to challenge players to explore *Doom 64*'s gothic environments in near darkness. This was down to Midway rather than id, but *Doom*'s creators fully supported the decision. "Midway had done an outstanding *Doom* for the PlayStation," John recalls, "so when it came to us to ask to make *Doom* for the N64 we told it to do whatever it wanted. *Doom* had very effective dark areas in it, and *Doom 64* was about what it would feel like if the whole game was dark. It was about seeing what that was like. That could have been the influence for *Doom 3*. Maybe its developers thought that felt pretty good, and that *Doom 3* could be even darker."

Discussing the reasons for *Doom 3*'s dimly lit environments, its lead coder Robert Duffy cites id's tech and the survival horror themes that were facilitated by that tech. He credits changing fashions in gaming for *Doom 3*'s focus on narrative-led gameplay and it favouring steady progression. "*Doom 3* was the first game that had real-time lighting and shadows; ▶



» [PC] The powered-down UAC research facility in *Doom 3* is a dark labyrinth of corridors, stairs and elevators.



► that was a signature of id Tech 4,” Robert observes. “At the time, a lot of gaming was moving away from the high-paced arena-type stuff. We also looked at some of the critical successes like *Half-Life* and other similar games. So I think we wanted a more story-based game, and survival horror fitted nicely into that. This was the first time that we were really able to do these sorts of things to that effect.”

The process of basing *Doom* on an unfolding storyline led to id exploring development techniques that were new to the studio. The most minimal of blueprints acted as the foundations for this new approach, which involved storyboards and securing the talents of a noted author. “John Carmack said that he wanted a one-page design doc, so that was what we produced,” Robert recalls. “That went into *Doom 3* being the first id game that went extensively into

» [PC] *Doom 3*’s unnerving atmosphere, jump scares and gothic monstrosities give it a survival horror vibe.



storyboarding, and we really built the game to that. Our lead designer Tim Willits worked up a base narrative, and then we worked with Matt Costello on that. He took the stuff Tim had written and fleshed out the story. *Doom 3* had terminal screens everywhere, and we did a lot of environmental storytelling through those."

As the backstory for *Doom 3* came together, its publisher Activision appointed a producer for the project. Of the many hats Jonathan Moses wore during the project, his roles included hiring and managing voice actors to bring the sequel's dark and haunting cutscenes to life. "By the time *Doom 3* was in production I was the id guy for Activision," Jonathan beams. "I had been working closely with id on *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, and then by the time *Doom 3* ramped up I just continued those relationships. This was the first game that id had ever done with that kind of voice production. On a bunch of the games I had worked on before I had worked with actors, so I helped id with a lot of that."

As *Doom 3*'s development began to be measured in years rather than months, one of Jonathan's responsibilities was to manage expectations on the part of its publisher and act as a timekeeper in relation to its developers. He also addressed

"WITH THE IMPS WE CERTAINLY PLACED THEM WHERE THEY WOULD BE CROUCHED AND IN A DARK SPOT, AND I FEEL LIKE THE CREATURES ACTED LIKE THEY PREFERRED DARKNESS"

ROBERT DUFFY

logistical constraints and pitched in whenever needed. "I understood how to bridge the gap between the suits at Activision that wanted it done today and the guys at id who were saying that it wasn't quite ready yet," Jonathan comments. "It wasn't about rushing id as much as making sure everybody understood what the timelines were. id wanted to keep its team

small, so there was a lot of figuring out what it should focus its limited resources on and what could be done by me or other people to help it coordinate the logistics."

While Jonathan balanced commercial concerns with artistic aspirations, id artists including Kenneth Scott and Seneca Menard brought Hell to life in the form of demonic creations that hid in *Doom 3*'s shadows. Head programmer Robert Duffy saw gameplay and tech benefits to these monsters lurking in the pitch black. "With the Imps we certainly placed them where they would be crouched and in a dark spot, and I feel like the creatures acted like they preferred darkness," Robert ponders. "I think that came out of the natural way of setting up gameplay to take advantage of the lighting and the shadows. If you heard an Imp ▶

» [PC] Your flashlight proves to be just as useful as your many weapons while you explore *Doom 3*'s overrun facility.

STAGES OF EVOLUTION:

2017-2020

DOOM VFR (2017)

A spin-off from the 2016 reboot of *Doom*, although it's made for VR. Unless your set-up has a joystick you teleport to move forward and to get to higher or lower levels. Then the Glory Kills work by teleporting into staggered foes to make them explode.



SIGIL (2019)

John Romero's unofficial fifth episode of the original *Doom* has nine missions plus a deathmatch version of each. Its single-player offering is arguably more testing than the original episodes. John's sequel *Sigil II* in 2023 got even more plaudits.



DOOM 64: THE LOST LEVELS (2020)

Created for the 2020 *Doom 64* re-release, The Lost Levels is a new episode that was authored by the re-release's developer Nightdive Studios. Its ending connects the narrative of the original games to the reboot, *Eternal* and *The Dark Ages*.



DOOM ETHERNAL: THE ANCIENT GODS PART ONE (2020)

The first of two expansions for *Doom Eternal*, it consists of four levels: two set on Earth, another located in Hell and a fourth that takes place in another dimension. It also introduces five new monsters and two bosses.



» [PC] Many of your foes in *Doom 3* are UAC workers who have been killed and reanimated by demonic forces.



STAGES OF EVOLUTION:

2021-2024

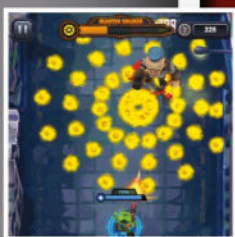
DOOM ETERNAL: THE ANCIENT GODS PART TWO (2021)

New features in *Part Two* include supreme ruler of Hell, The Dark Lord, and the Sentinel Hammer. This launches the Doom Slayer into the air before bringing him crashing down, which causes a destructive shockwave as it slams into the ground.



MIGHTY DOOM (2023)

The top-down roguelike *Mighty Doom* was a short-lived mobile title set in the *Doom* universe. You got new weapons by filling an ability bar. This was done by killing demons, either with your autofire armaments or up close with a Glory Kill.



DOOM + DOOM II (2024)

Another re-release from Nightdive Studios, this bundle features *The Ultimate Doom*, *Doom II*, *The Master Levels*, *TNT Evilution*, *Plutonia Experiment*, *No Rest For The Living*, *Sigil*, *Sigil II*, and an exclusive new *Doom II* expansion called *Legacy Of Rust*.



DOOM II: LEGACY OF RUST (2024)

Legacy Of Rust has two new episodes: *The Vulcan Abyss* and *Counterfeit Eden*. It adds six new enemies, including a demonic version of Doomguy, and two new weapons: the *Incinerator* and *Calamity Blade*.



► back in a far corner and then you saw the light from a fireball you knew that those were all super important cues, but that also demonstrated the technology."

The critical response and impressive sales of *Doom 3* when it appeared in 2003 more than validated its lengthy gestation period.

In analysing this success, its producer for Activision Jonathan Moses credits its immersive narrative and the cutting-edge tech that underpinned its characters, environments and visual effects. "Where id saw its tech going was John Carmack's brilliance in how lighting could work to make what you saw on-screen look photorealistic, while also being aware that games were becoming more story-driven," Jonathan assesses. "So I think the success of *Doom 3* was down to the ultimate hype

of id doing something that was revolutionary in terms of tech and was narrative-led. You needed to upgrade your PC to really get the most out of *Doom 3*, so it was just that hype that made it so successful."

Thirteen years after *Doom 3*'s release no further core titles had followed, although expansion packs and spin-offs had filled the void. Then in 2016, *Doom*

was unveiled. This reboot, which came from the ashes of *Doom 4* after it was cancelled in 2011, introduced *Glory Kills* that involved massacring weakened foes before stealing their health, as the reboot's principal mission designer Jason O'Connell details. "Prior to *Doom* there were some clever systems designers prototyping different mechanics, and they stumbled upon this refill mechanic where you killed an enemy and then health or whatever dropped," Jason remarks. "As the game's development moved on we leaned into that, because it was like this butt-clenching feeling when you were close to death but it was in your power to refill. It felt like you were bringing the fight to the demons as constantly as possible, and that doing that was fuelling your success."

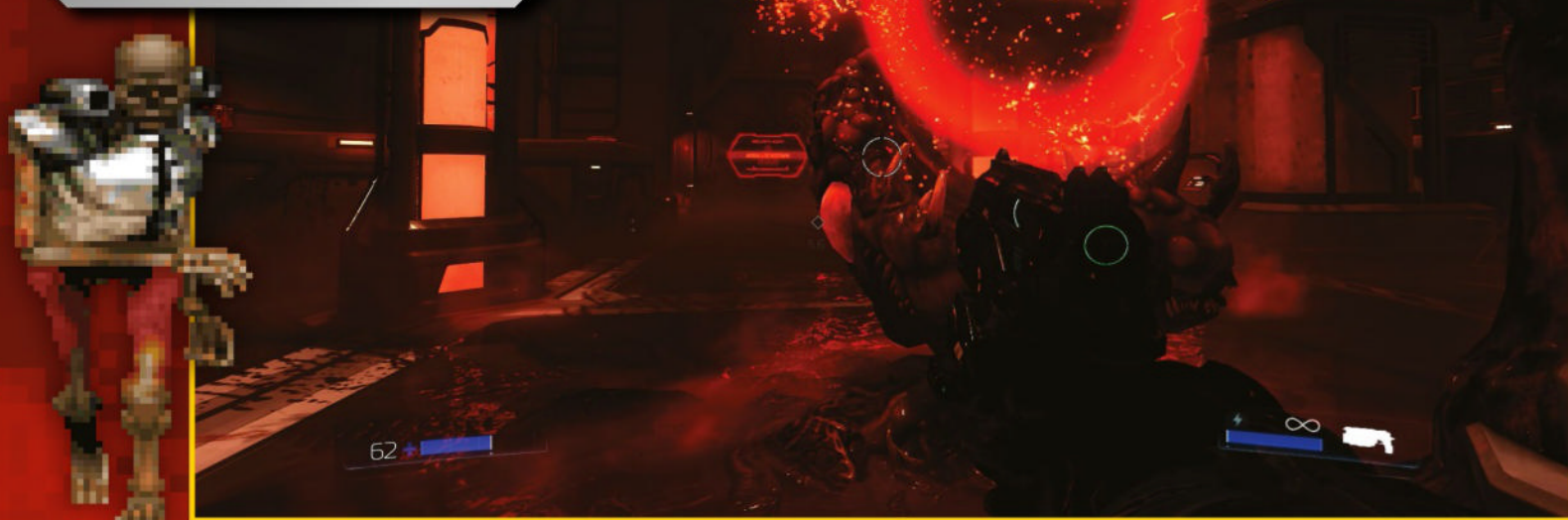
Just as the *Glory Kills* in the *Doom* reboot evolved from the close-quarters kills

established by previous *Doom* titles, the game's hero jumping impressive heights and distances could be traced back to clearing gaps in *Doom* by running towards them. The reboot also incorporated double-jumps made possible by high-tech boots. "You jumped way higher in *Doom*; you couldn't jump like that in the original *Doom*," Jason concurs. "That started

"YOU JUMPED WAY HIGHER IN DOOM; YOU COULDN'T JUMP LIKE THAT IN THE ORIGINAL DOOM. THAT STARTED TO IDENTIFY VERTICALITY A LOT, AND IT OPENED UP EXPLORATION"

JASON O'CONNELL

» [PC] An early objective in the reboot has you destroying a Gore nest, after which all hell breaks loose.





» [PC] The reboot's firefights are more cinematic than the original game's, but they're no less intense.

to identify verticality a lot, and it opened up exploration to a much greater degree. Now you weren't limited to just flat planes or crossing a floor, you could climb up and explore higher. We could make those UAC facilities much grander in scope and make the player feel like they were really exploring those areas. Then it was a logical evolution to go with a double-jump."

Another area of evolution saw the collection of power-ups in the reboot revolve around something other than finding them lying around, as had been prevalent in earlier *Doom* games. Instead, upgrades were secured from drones in the field, although this trend was reversed by 2019's *Doom Eternal*. "I think there was an element of keeping a certain amount of realism; *Doom* [the reboot] was very grounded," Jason contemplates. "It was kind of in this realm where it was still *Doom 3*-ish, where that world could have existed. Trying not to gamify it was the goal initially, because it didn't need to be game-y. So if there was an upgrade then you could get it from some droid. But all of that went away later with *Doom Eternal*; we just made that crazy cool!"

The new weapons in the reboot's follow-up were one of *Doom Eternal*'s main attractions. The opportunities offered by the grappling hook-like Meat Hook, the energy-bolt-firing Ballista, the gauntlet-mounted DoomBlade and their respective upgrades weren't lost on Jason in his role as principal level designer. "Once we



» [PC] id Software first announced *Doom 4* in 2008. After several attempts it was restarted in 2011 and evolved into the reboot *Doom*.

» [PC] *Doom Eternal's* short-range DoomBlade cuts through demon flesh like it was butter.



» [PC] In *Doom Eternal* you can climb up or along certain walls in order to gain access to new areas.



» [PC] Although grenades are limited in *Doom Eternal*, they're remarkably effective projectile weapons.



► introduced the Meat Hook it was like, 'Shit!' because now you could fling yourself across the arena. So the levels kept growing to support that," Jason explains. "The Ballista was a riff on the Gauss Cannon from *Doom*; it was just the next level up, and the DoomBlade gave some variety to the Glory Kills. Then we expanded all of those weapons with upgrades that changed their behaviour, and a lot of that goes to how much shit you could kill with one blast!"

Adding to the sense of power that the weapons in *Doom Eternal* gave the player was its hero's over-the-top abilities. Thanks to his high-tech armour, he could climb sheer walls and swing across horizontal bars with ease. Jason credits these platforming challenges with providing variety. "I think they were considered pace breakers, because everything was combat heavy," Jason reviews. "I would say Doom Slayer's persona is this godlike man, so of course he could climb up a wall. He could do crazy things when it was all leaning towards him wanting to kill everything he saw. So we experimented with a lot of movement mechanics, like swinging on monkey bars. We also introduced the shoulder cannon, which was like a Predator-type thing, because of course he would need additional firepower at his shoulder!"

To take advantage of this aptitude for carnage, *Doom Eternal* introduced the



» [PC] *Doom: The Dark Ages*' macabre Skull Crusher gun creates shards of demon skulls and uses them as ammo.

concept of 'destructible demons.' This ramped up the game's gore levels, as it allowed players to strip demons down to the bone using firepower, but it also let them blast grafted equipment off their hides. "Demons would have weapons or armour you could shoot off," Jason specifies. "Take the Revenants and their shoulder-mounted rockets. There was an element of skill hitting a jump pad, flying into the air, zooming past real fast and picking those things off their shoulders. Verticality was a focus from very early on. You were still being driven forward, but you were moving through the air a lot of the time. On the ground you were still fast as hell, but in the air you could take advantage of things more."

In contrast to *Doom Eternal*, its 2025 mediaeval follow-up is literally more grounded, in that *Doom: The Dark Ages* depicts its hero as a bulked-up ironclad tank of a man with the skills of a gladiator rather than those of a combat trained acrobat. Of course, being set in the *Doom* universe, *The Dark Ages* depicts its own distinct mediaeval era. One where its hero wields a shield fitted with a circular chainsaw that both provides a means of defence and acts as a long-range throwing weapon.

One of *The Dark Ages*' purely offensive but equally mediaeval options is a gun that crushes demon skulls and blasts the resulting bone shards at opponents. Then

"ONCE WE INTRODUCED THE MEAT HOOK IT WAS LIKE, 'SHIT!' – BECAUSE NOW YOU COULD FLING YOURSELF ACROSS THE ARENA. SO THE LEVELS JUST KEPT GROWING TO SUPPORT THAT"

JASON O'CONNELL

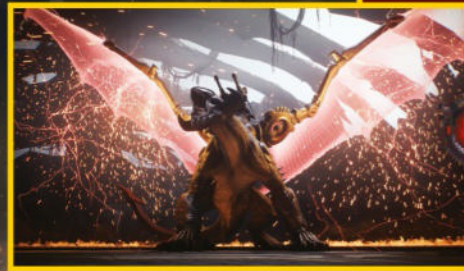
every fantasy mediaeval world needs a dragon, so *The Dark Ages* lets you ride a cybernetic one into battle.

When comparing *The Dark Ages* to the original game, *Doom* designer John Romero highlights an increasing focus on close-quarters combat and the prequel's mediaeval setting. He concludes with his thoughts on the ongoing success of the *Doom* series. "In *Doom*

you were going up against Hell, and just *destroying* it with all these weapons," John enthuses. "Now in *The Dark Ages* you're doing that up close and personal far more, and with *The Dark Ages* id has gone back into the past to tell the origin story of the *Doom* Slayer. *Doom* being such a successful series is definitely down to its settings, so the storyline being about humanity against Hell. Also the fact that *Doomguy*, who has turned into *Doom* Slayer, is basically the most powerful killing machine in the universe." ★



» [PC] The lineage of *Doom: The Dark Ages*' monsters is unmistakable, but their challenge is far greater.



MODDING DOOM

Q&A WITH NOTED DOOM MODDER DANIEL GIMMER

WHEN AND WHY DID YOU START DOOM MODDING?

It was around 1993 when I first got an editor. There was no internet in Germany at the time that I could access, so the only way I could get one was by buying a CD-ROM. What attracted me to modding was a demo CD-ROM with a lot of PWADS. I thought that was interesting.

I had a few friends that were interested as well, and that gave me motivation.



WHY DID DOOM MODDING BECOME SO POPULAR, AND HOW DID YOUR SITE REALM667 EVOLVE?

I think the simplicity of the *Doom* engine was the reason for the modding community's success. It was very easy to create maps with it. The community was very helpful, and you could talk to people who explained how to do things. I first used a Geocities page builder to build realm667 in 1998, and then around 2010 I started to post news articles about the community. I also added categories and filters to allow modders to gather resources.

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF DOOM MODDING?

The community will continue as long as people continue working on it, particularly with people developing source ports that add new features. The *ZDoom* developers, for example, are making things possible now that were pure imagination ten years ago. What's interesting is that there are new modders aged 15 to 20, who weren't even around when *Doom* was released. So *Doom* modding could continue for another 30 years.

CLASSIC MOMENTS

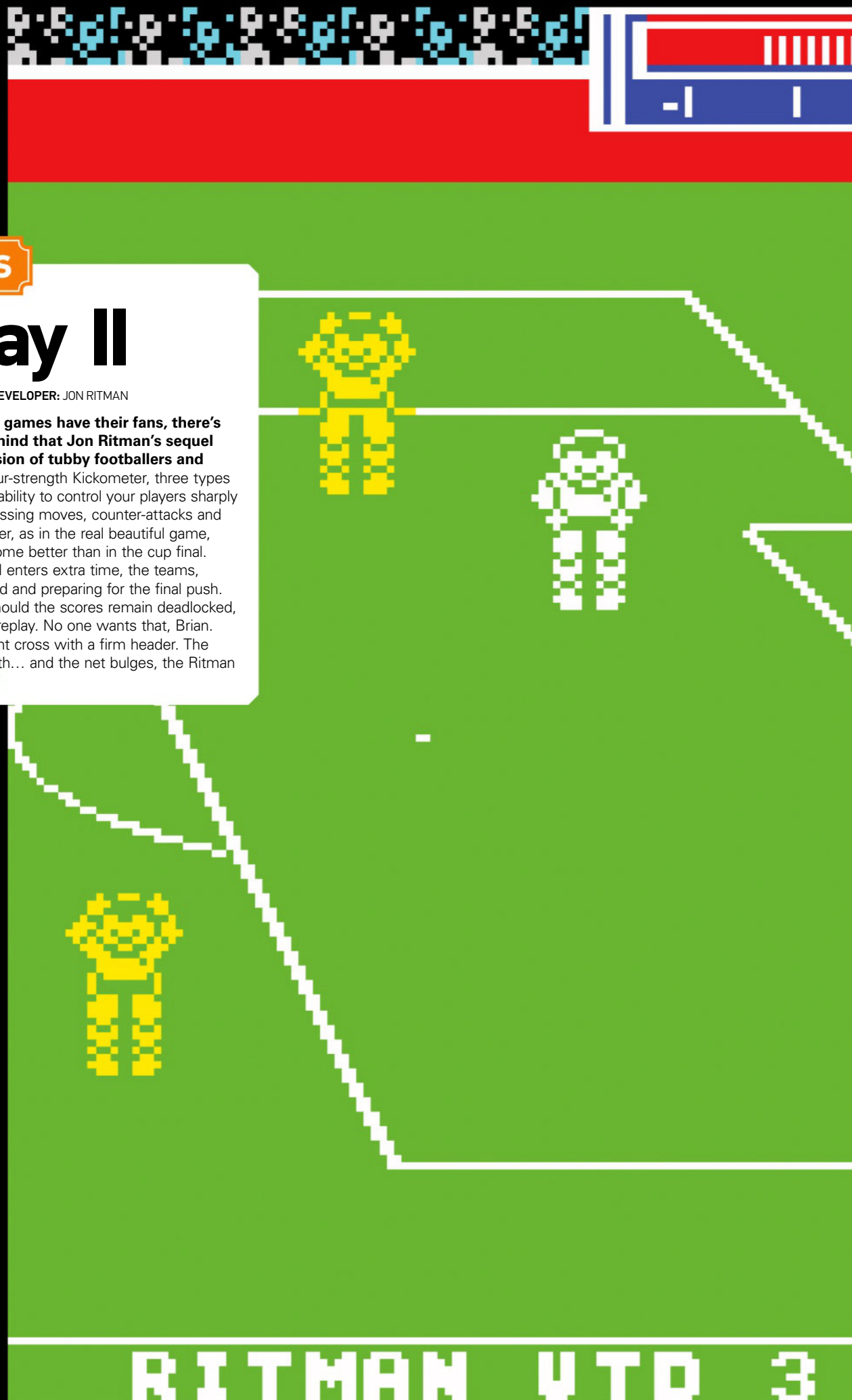
Match Day II

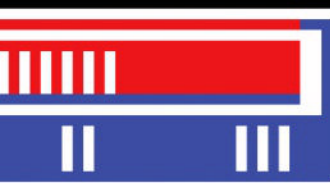
» PLATFORM: ZX SPECTRUM » RELEASED: 1987 » DEVELOPER: JON RITMAN

While other Spectrum football games have their fans, there's no doubt in Retro Gamer's mind that Jon Ritman's sequel is the best, a glorious explosion of tubby footballers and useless goalies. Offering a four-strength Kickometer, three types of kick, plus league and cup options, the ability to control your players sharply gives you a chance to construct actual passing moves, counter-attacks and desperate, last-minute defending. However, as in the real beautiful game, it's all about the glory, and this doesn't come better than in the cup final. Imagine the scene: it's two-all as the final enters extra time, the teams, Ritman Utd and Soccerama, battle-scarred and preparing for the final push. There are no penalties in *Match Day II*; should the scores remain deadlocked, the teams will have to do it all again in a replay. No one wants that, Brian. But, then, a hero rises, meeting a pin-point cross with a firm header. The keeper shuffles, the crowd holds its breath... and the net bulges, the Ritman Utd fans going berserk. Glory is yours. *

BIO

While a self-confessed non-football fan, Jon Ritman had little choice in creating this sequel thanks to the outstanding success of *Match Day*. Bespoke sprites came in thanks to his artist partner Bernie Drummond, replacing the original's *Bear Bovver* players as *Match Day II* became the pair's valedictory to the ZX Spectrum. It was a wonderful game to end on: using a unique control system – known as Diamond Deflection – players could manipulate the ball with deft touches, adding an extra dimension to its gameplay. The lads played a blinder.





29



MORE CLASSIC MATCH DAY II MOMENTS

Use Your Head

There's a cunning technical addition to *Match Day II*. Aware that headers are an integral part of the game, Ritman designed his players' bonces so that the ball would ricochet much faster from them, allowing for some stunning headed goals such as this.



Cheeky Back-heel

While its use often results in conceding possession or hilarious own goals, *Match Day II*'s back-heel is a fun extra and a useful option when your players are under pressure. Just try not to use it when you're close to your own goal.



Your Favourite Club

Want to help Tottenham finally net some silverware again? Or get your local club playing against Premier League giants such as Liverpool and Manchester City? *Match Day II* gives you the chance to go toe-to-toe with the best, recreating legends on the pitch.



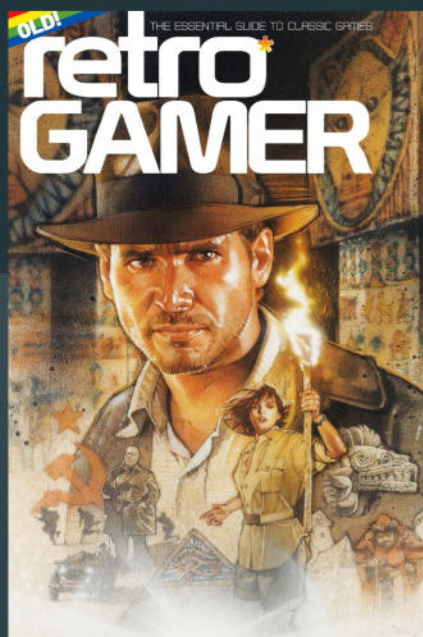
At Full Stretch

By Jon's own admission, the goalkeepers in *Match Day II* are rubbish. Rooted to a diagonal plane, they can't catch the ball or rush out to claim it. But what they can do is dive, and there's nothing more satisfying than denying a certain goal at full stretch.



2 BOMBAY MIX

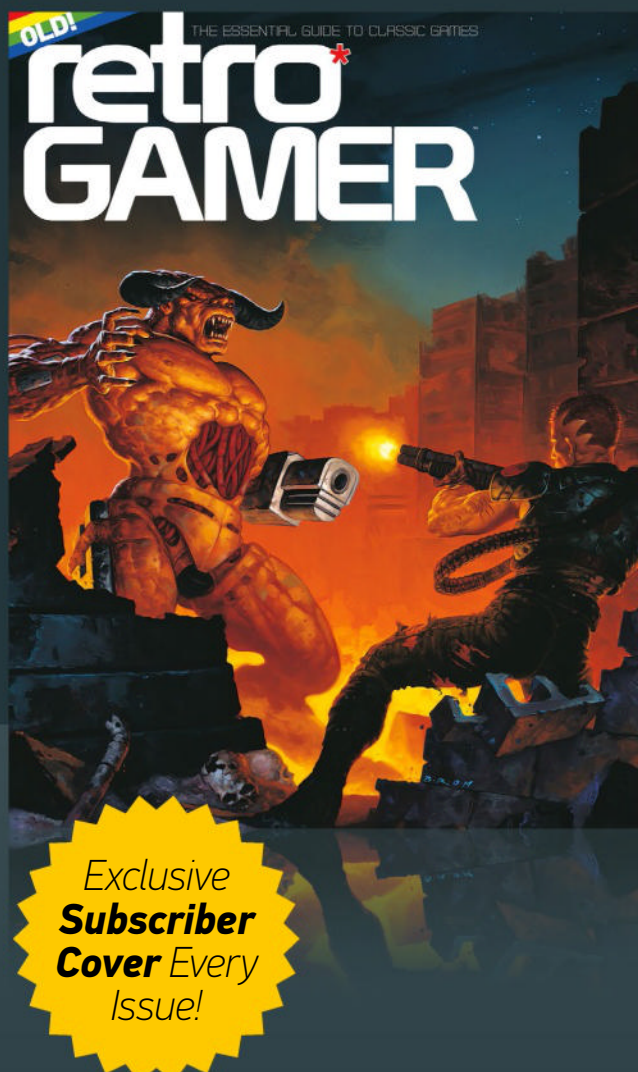
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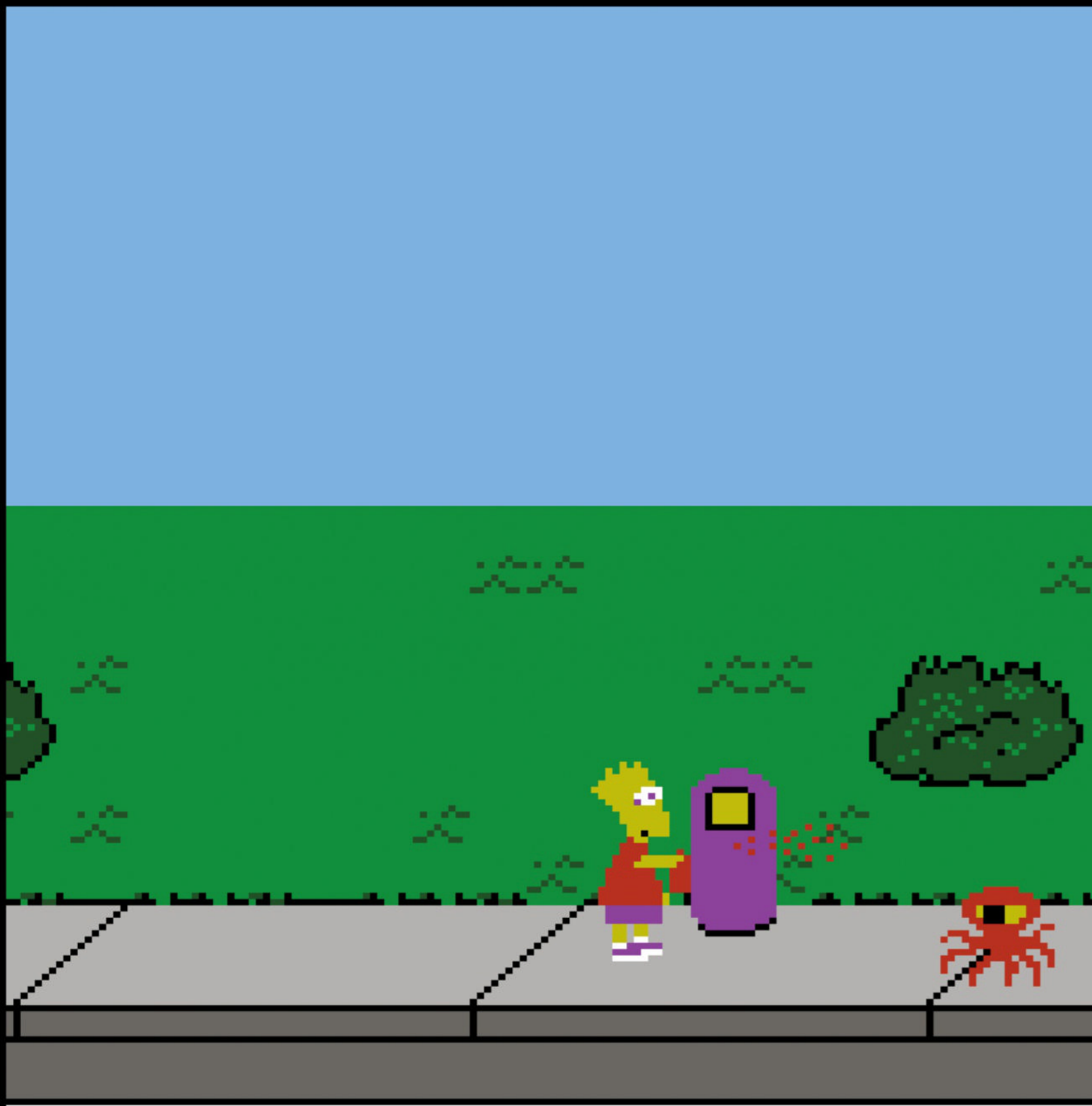
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X-RAY SPECS

1000

2

59

SCORE

LIVES

TIME



The Simpsons: Bart Vs The Space Mutants

NOT ENTIRELY CROMULENT

» RETROREVIEWAL



» NES » 1991 » IMAGINEERING
Growing up in the Nineties, *The Simpsons* was about as big as anything in pop culture got – you couldn't avoid the T-shirts, Bart plushies or the

arcade game, which is especially impressive because the show wasn't on free TV for quite a while. Because of that, my experience of the show was defined for years by a couple of VHS tapes my mum had won, featuring episodes from the first season. Those tapes featured an advert for *Bart Vs The Space Mutants* before the episodes started, and the way Bart was animated when playing it made it look like the most exciting thing ever.

Flash forward to 1998. By this point, I've received a hand-me-down NES from a cousin, and my love for *The Simpsons* has grown as BBC2 had started airing the show. The local video rental shop had started selling off its NES and Mega Drive games to make way for PlayStation stock, and sat there was the game from that advert I watched so long ago. So naturally, I passed up on it and bought *Mario Is Missing* (see issue 131 for that story). Next time around, I went with my gut and bought into Bart's adventure.

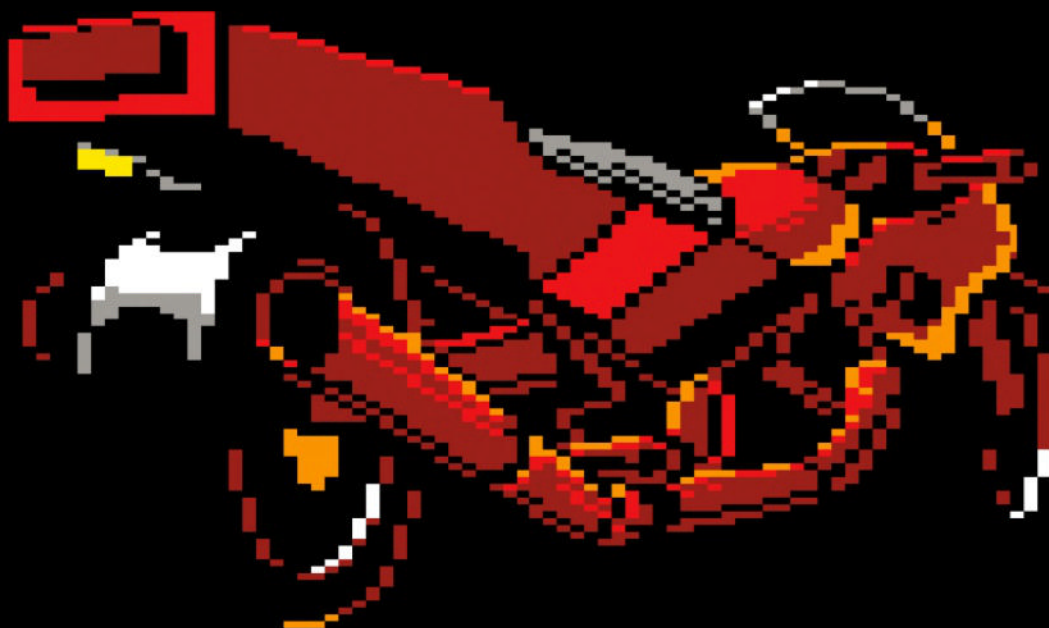
To give it credit, it was more fun than *Mario Is Missing*, but that was mostly because of the amusing first level. You really get to enjoy Bart's frame of mind too, causing mischief by spray-painting things, setting off rockets and getting to prank call Moe, and there are fun references like Jebediah Springfield's statue talking about getting "ahead" too. The controls are awkward, which doesn't seem like a big deal until platforming becomes a much bigger deal in the second stage. The high difficulty of the game meant that I never actually got any further, and I had to conclude that I'd been had by a flashy advert. It could have been worse. *

2 24
GOALS

THE MAKING OF 750cc GRAND PRIX

INSPIRED BY SUPER HANG-ON AND HAVING SEEN HIS PREVIOUS RACER ZOOM TOWARDS THE TOP OF THE CHARTS, TWIN TURBO V8 DEVELOPER KEN MURFITT PRODUCED A SUPERFAST, GRAPHICALLY STUNNING MOTORCYCLE GAME FOR THE AMSTRAD CPC THAT COULD DRIVE PLAYERS ROUND THE BEND

WORDS BY DAVID CROOKES



» Ken took a photo of the game's screen when it was set to be called *Super Bike Simulator*.



» [Amstrad CPC] You're racing against opponents rather than against the clock in this game.

In March 1985, almost a year after the Amstrad CPC 464 was released, Ken Murfitt's father won a rather lucrative competition. He'd entered a character modifier app called Symogen 464 into a coding contest being run by *Amstrad Computer User (ACU)* magazine and bagged himself an impressive £2,000.

Inspired, Ken began programming his own CPC titles, starting with a formula one simulator called *Racer* which he coded in BASIC. "It really shows what can be done without resorting to machine code," the magazine said of an entry which won Ken £600. With four circuits, tricky bends and clever use of ink switching which allowed for a speeding track effect, this game put Ken on the road to commercial success.

Having decided to learn machine code, Ken began to code another racer inspired by Sega's arcade driving game, *Out Run*. Codemasters agreed to publish what became *Twin Turbo V8* and it hit the shop shelves in 1989 after which it performed well both in terms of its on-screen abilities and sales.

This prompted the publisher to commission another motor-inspired game, this time based around motorbikes. "They asked me to do it and I was quite pleased," Ken says. "The publisher wanted this one to be like *Super Hang-On* and it seemed like the Codies were looking to create clones of the major Sega arcade titles for the Amstrad."

Codemasters envisioned it would be called *Super Bike Simulator* in line with so many of its other titles and Ken was

"IT SEEMED LIKE THE
CODIES WERE LOOKING TO
CREATE CLONES OF THE
MAJOR SEGA ARCADE TITLES"
KEN MURFITT

left alone to figure out how best to tackle the project. He felt the CPC would be the natural platform "mainly because we, as a family, owned a CPC". Ken also believed there would be many benefits from targeting Sugar's machine. "The market for the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 was already crowded and sometimes it pays to serve the underrepresented market," he says. "I also happened to love the video colours on the CPC – that pink and orange – and I felt the CPC also had a fantastic keyboard – at least the earlier CPC models did with the taller keys before the cost-reduced keyboard came out."

Still a teenager (he was just 17 years old when *Twin Turbo V8* was released), Ken worked from his bedroom in his parent's house. To lend his coding endeavours a more professional sheen, he operated under the label Scope Soft even though, he admits, "It was always just me – and I never directly worked for Codemasters at Leamington Spa."

For the most part, the game's concept was simple enough. Players would choose the number of laps they wanted to complete – either two, three or four – and they would seek to qualify for each of the four circuits (Silverstone, UK; Jacarepagua, Brazil; Ricardo, Mexico; and Paul Ricard, France) by coming third or higher in the preceding qualifiers.



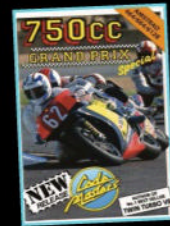
» [Amstrad CPC] The sprites were large and well drawn, giving all the thrill of a bike race.

Rather than race against the clock, players would compete against eight opponents and they'd be able to do so while monitoring some vital stats such as the speed, position and lap number. Players would also need to keep an eye on the amount of fuel they had left and they needed to monitor the state of the tyres – both of these were vital in case a pit stop was needed.

To speed up development, Ken had decided to lean on his earlier projects and, as a consequence, much of the code for the motorbike game – which ended up being renamed *750cc Grand Prix* – was based on that of *Twin Turbo V8*. "The track selections were a hold over from *Racer* which also appeared as a type-in the March 1986 issue of *ACU*," Ken says. "And I borrowed from *Pitstop II* for the Commodore 64 as well, an incredible product for its time."



» As part of his research, Ken took photos of *Super Hang-On* at Brighton Pier arcade, and nearby arcades, in the Eighties. "These had to be taken surreptitiously otherwise they'd ask you to leave the arcade – even if you were spending money!," he says. "I think the *750cc* bike graphics were lifted directly from the top-left photo."



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:**
CODEMASTERS
» **DEVELOPER:**
SCOPE SOFT
» **PLATFORM:**
AMSTRAD CPC,
ZX SPECTRUM
» **RELEASED:**
1989
» **GENRE:**
RACING



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

RACER

PLATFORM:
AMSTRAD CPC
RELEASED: 1986

TWIN TURBO V8 (PICTURED)

PLATFORM:
AMSTRAD CPC
RELEASED: 1988

SWIV

PLATFORM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS
RELEASED: 1991

RIDE HARD

FEEL THE ENGINE ROAR
WITH THESE 8-BIT
MOTORBIKE OFFERINGS



EXCITEBIKE

■ Created by Shigeru Miyamoto for the NES in 1984, this single-player, side-scrolling racer proved to be an instant classic. Players had to zip along five tracks and move between lanes to avoid obstacles while leaping off ramps and aiming to come third or higher.



MOTORBIKE MADNESS

■ Mixing motorbikes with *Marble Madness*, hence the name, this isometric Mastertronic gem required a fair bit of practice but get it right and you'd not only hurtle down the course, you'd pick up cash for a speedy finish and get to upgrade your bike.



SUPER HANG-ON

■ Sega's racer took the arcades by storm thanks to a ride-on cabinet, but it also went down well at home. Although particularly playable on the likes of the Mega Drive, the Speccy version also fared well with detailed graphics and large stages to negotiate.



ROAD RASH

■ Bringing a level of violence to motorcycle games, *Road Rash* had you jostling and bashing opponents in order to try and win the races while trying to stay on the road! Debuting on the Mega Drive, it also made its way to various 8-bit consoles.



» The BASIC art program Ken used to make graphics and title screens, here showing a Mode 1 image of his cat.



» This was Ken's development desk. The Apricot PC (left) runs the cross assembler for the target Amstrad CPC (right). As you can see from the wall posters, Ken was a car nut. And the back of the chair says 'Ken the Programmer' – before he had heard of software engineers!



» [Amstrad CPC] Just as in *Super Hang-On*, if you crash, your rider comes off the bike and collides with the ground.

► The latter game by Epyx is what inspired Ken to include a pit lane in *Twin Turbo V8* which was something that had not been added to his previous racing games. "I wanted to have some 'value' for *750cc Grand Prix* over *Twin Turbo V8* because I didn't just want to just switch car graphics to bike graphics and call it a day," he says. "The hope was to create the anxiety of seeing your opponents whizzing past you as you are fiddling about in the pit stop! All of this was new code and graphics."

Other than that, he drew on his background of having played *Super Hang-On* rather than on any proficiency in actually riding a motorbike. "I had no real-life experience with motorbikes and, in retrospect, I should have talked to my uncle who is a big motorbike fan," he says. "I had no concept of how big and powerful a 750cc superbike would have been at the time (and keep in mind that I did not choose the game's name). I was more interested in the vibe of *Super Hang-On* and the technical challenges."

Even so, Ken's ambition for the new title remained the same as for his other

games. "I wanted to create a budget title so that nobody would feel too ripped off and I wanted to, hopefully, provide a good experience (unlike the Amstrad's *Out Run* at full price)," he says. "It also needed to be a single tape load on a 64K machine – in other words, no multi-load – and I wanted it to have large, bold graphics with fast-scaled sprites that were each stored once with reduction in real-time. I had not seen this done before."

Rather than use an off-the-shelf art package – the most popular ones for the Amstrad CPC being The OCP Art Studio and The Advanced OCP Art Studio – Ken created his own drawing app (which, incidentally, he never released). "I wrote the art tool in Amstrad BASIC and it was mostly a pixel-plotter with some basic features like circle and line drawing, flood filling and saving and loading," he says. "I used it to make the title screen art and sprites – the title screen for *750cc Grand Prix* was how I wanted the game to look in my head. I just had no real idea how to do it."

As with *Twin Turbo V8*, *750cc Grand Prix* was written in machine code. "I'd begun fiddling around with the Maxam assembler," Ken says of a popular



» [Amstrad CPC] You can determine how many laps of each of the four tracks you wish to complete.



» [Amstrad CPC] To progress, you need to come third or higher but can still rack up a high score.

CONVERSION CONFUSION

THE ZX VERSION HAD A VERY DIFFERENT SPEC

■ When *750cc Grand Prix* was released on the ZX Spectrum, it looked and felt like a different game. But then it wasn't a straight port. Ken Murfitt, creator of the CPC original couldn't produce the game for Sinclair's machine. "I should have just made the ZX Spectrum version of *750cc* myself but I did not own a Spectrum nor a PDS hardware interface for it," he says. Instead it was coded by WASP, a developer set up by the late, great Lyndon Sharp to port Codemasters games to the Spectrum, which produced the game from the ground up.

According to *Crash* magazine in February 1991, Lyndon got the idea after riding pillion on Codemasters' spokesperson Mike Clarke's motorbike.

But rather than race on tracks around the world, the Spectrum game was based entirely in the UK. The biggest difference between the CPC and Speccy versions, however, was the addition of a tilting screen. Lean into a bend and the screen tilted in that direction. It was a nice touch, especially for a budget game.

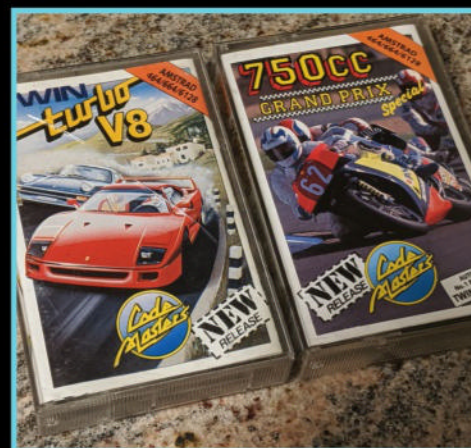
Ken Murfitt, creator of the CPC original, didn't like it, though. "I would not have added a tilting horizon. In my opinion it destroys the purity of what the biking experience is about and does not follow Sega's lead," he says. "But don't get me wrong, I love a tilted horizon when it's needed, much to the chagrin of my art teacher. Anyway, this taught me something about having artistic and creative control."





» [Amstrad CPC] *750cc Grand Prix* was surprisingly fast, making the bike hard to control at higher speeds.

MAKING OF: 750CC GRAND PRIX



» These are Ken's two games for Codemasters, both for the Amstrad CPC.

package that had been created by the British company Arnor. Maxam provided developers with a simple way into machine code either as a true assembler or via the use of in-line code. "I wrote score routines, stuff that printed numbers and sprites," Ken continues. "I figured out how to flip between two screens in memory as well. At some point I found a second hand PDS (Programmer Development System) invented by Andrew Glaister who is actually from my home town of Crawley. This meant I could cross-assemble my code from an Apricot PC to the Amstrad and also debug it 'remotely'. This was a major advantage in getting *750cc Grand Prix* (and *Twin Turbo V8*) completed."

One of the hallmarks of *750cc Grand Prix* was its blistering speed. It was so fast, it could actually be quite difficult to play, especially with so many tight bends. Ken puts the speed down to, he says, some relatively primitive coding. "The sprite routines were very primitive, only masking every two pixels in display mode zero, and duplicating every texture pixel (texel) vertically," he says. "There is no sprite clipping either, hence the black bars down the left and right of the screen which narrowed the display."

"I HAD NO CONCEPT OF HOW BIG AND POWERFUL A 750CC SUPERBIKE WOULD HAVE BEEN AT THE TIME"
KEN MURFITT

There is, however, a reason for this. "I didn't know anything about fixed point arithmetic, sub pixel accuracy, per-pixel sprite masking, sine tables or even how to clear the accumulator efficiently ('xor a')," he admits. "I just knew I wanted to put big, scaling sprites on the screen as fast as possible, and to have a perspective road that moves about the player vehicle, as opposed to say, *Super Cycle* where the player bike slides left and right over the road."

Still, if the game didn't feel quick enough, there was a way to really get the fire going thanks to the built-in turbo boost – although, despite being mentioned on the game's packaging, it was easily overlooked. "The biggest mistake I made was not making it clear to the player that they should hold the spacebar to boost their speed," he says. "It was intended to be like the square red

button on the arcade *Super Hang-On* and behave the same way, to push you to the limit around corners."

Helping to drive the game forward was a lively score by David Whittaker. "He provided the sound and music and he was great, providing a drop-in solution for me near the end of the project," Ken says. With that, the game was done and it was released in 1989, the same year as *Twin Turbo V8*.

"*Twin Turbo V8* took me quite a while to do, creating the graphics and learning how to debug machine code and I was upgrading to PDS from Maxam so it took more than a year to write that game (plus I was at secondary school)," Ken admits. "Developing *750cc Grand Prix* took much less time, maybe a couple of months, while I was also working on college projects."

Ken says he enjoyed making *750cc Grand Prix* and he loved the fact one developer could effectively see a game from zero to retail. "I always liked the idea of individual authorship and artistry," he says. Yet he didn't actually see a physical copy of the game until quite recently. "I had to purchase it from eBay – usually Codemasters would send you a stack of sample tapes but I think they forgot about me in this case!" he says. The Codies were definitely in the slow lane with that one. ✨



» [Amstrad CPC] Without good use of the pit stops, you'll either burn out your tyres or run out of fuel.



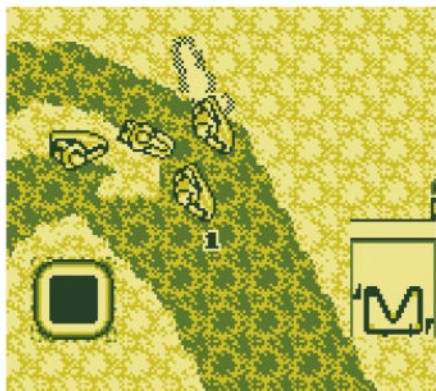
» [Amstrad CPC] The pit stops will eat away at your race progress but you need to top up those bars or it'll be game over.



» [Amstrad CPC] The corners are the most difficult part of the game – you need to get them right every time.

ESSENTIAL GAME WAVE RACE

You might think that *Micro Machines* would be the obvious choice here, as an established multiplayer classic that supports the Four Player Adapter, but we believe that Nintendo's Jet-Ski racer is actually the better choice for Game Boy players. It adopts a similar top-down perspective, but its slower pace and slicker handling simply work better on the small screen. *Wave Race* often gets overlooked compared to its impressive Nintendo 64 successor, but when it comes to four-player games on the Game Boy, this is the best of a limited bunch.



Four Player Adapter

» **PLATFORM:** Game Boy » **YEAR:** 1990

» **COST:** £19.99 (launch), £30+ (today, boxed), £5+ (today, unboxed)

It's hard not to applaud Nintendo's ambition in creating the **Four Player Adapter for the Game Boy**. At a time when the majority of home-console games were limited to two players at most, this visually unremarkable hub allowed for players to enjoy four-way fun by connecting their handheld consoles using standard Game Boy link cables. A relatively small number of games support four players, with a good choice of racing games but rather less representation of other genres.

The lack of support likely comes down to the fact that actually using the Four Player Adapter requires a lot of planning, since every player needs a copy of the same game. Connecting different generations of Game Boy hardware can also be a challenge, as the Four Player Adapter's connectors are designed for the original, larger version of the link cable, rather than the smaller port used by the Game Boy Pocket and Game Boy Color. Nintendo would remedy these problems for the Game Boy Advance, by building extra link ports into the cables and allowing multiplayer from a single cartridge. ★



Four Player Adapter fact

■ The Four Player Adapter was also available as part of a bundle with *F-1 Race* for £29.99, and this package is more commonly found in complete condition than the stand-alone version of the Four Player Adapter.



MAGAZINE CRAFT

PAUL GLANCEY

Paul was a kid that got his wish – landing his dream job of writing about something he loved for a magazine he loved in equal measure. He still has the pinch marks. From words in *Zzap!64* to takedowns in *Burnout*, settle down and read more of Paul's career with a nice cup of PG Tips!

Words by Stuart Hunt

THEN

After falling head over heels for his Commodore 64, Paul Glancey started his career as a staff writer on the iconic C64 magazine *Zzap!64*. Forming a close friendship with Julian Rignall at Newsfield, the two later worked together on *CVG* at EMAP before Paul launched the Mega Drive magazine *MegaTech*.



What were some of the first home computers you owned, Paul?

My older brother recommended a ZX81, because he had seen them advertised in a colour supplement. For about 18 months I was mad on it, typing in 1K chess programs from *Your Computer* magazine, or playing *3D Monster Maze* after I'd saved up for a 16K RAM pack. When Sinclair launched the Spectrum I was agog, but after selling the ZX81 I could only afford a 16K machine. It was great until I tried to use it for part of my O-level technology project and blew it up. It worked out in the end though – I returned it to Sinclair with this pleading letter and they replaced it with an old 48K Spectrum by mistake. Then it was *Manic Miner* all the way!

You must have jumped over to a C64 at some stage, considering you started your career on *Zzap!64*?

My friend got a Commodore 64 and showed me *High Noon* by Ocean and *Spy Vs Spy*, and I couldn't believe it. The music, the graphics, everything was amazing. My parents managed to scrape together enough money to buy me one on special offer from a catalogue returns shop. At that point I switched from reading *Crash* to *Zzap!64*.

How did you land a job as a staff writer on *Zzap!64*?

Julian Rignall, Gary Penn and Gary Liddon were on the magazine when I was reading it. One month, the editorial announced Gary Liddon was leaving the mag and invited readers who wanted to join the team to write in with a sample review. That was Newsfield's standard recruitment method. Anyway, I was 17, halfway through A-levels and hating them, so I wrote in. To my surprise I got a phone call one afternoon from someone saying they had received my review

and would I like to come in for an interview. At the end of the call, I asked who I was talking to and the voice said, "It's Julian Rignall." I put the phone down and ran around the room.

Can you remember your interview and what that experience was like?

I met Julian, Steve Jarratt and Ciarán Brennan, who was the editor at the time. I had to write a review of a game called *Deceptor* and then they took me to the pub for lunch – I looked about 12, so never went to pubs. We talked about games and then I had an interview with Ciarán in the afternoon. It was the most amazing experience. I waited weeks and weeks without hearing anything, so I rang them up and Steve Jarratt answered. He apologised and explained that they had given the job to someone else. That happened in July, and then in December Julian rang me again and said they had another staff writer opening and would I like to try again. I went down just before Christmas, and they offered me the job. The 4th of January 1988 was my first day at *Zzap!64*. That was the first day of the rest of my life really.

We assume you had to move to Ludlow for the job. Where were you staying?

My parents moved me down from Newcastle and it was the first time I had been away from home. I was staying in Mary's Guest House, at the top of Gravel Hill. It became quite famous with the Newsfield people because every time someone moved down to work there, that's where they stayed. I was there with Steve Jarratt, Wayne Allen, who ended up becoming the art director, Gordon Houghton and Kati Hamza eventually moved in there as well. There wasn't anything to do in Ludlow for youngish people, so we used to spend a lot of time playing *Bubble Bobble* on Steve's Atari ST, or rent videos to watch in the shared living room.

NOW

After working on magazines in-house, Paul went freelance before transitioning into game development as a game evaluator at Eidos Interactive. He then went on to work on several racing titles for studios such as Criterion, Black Rock Studios and UbiSoft Reflections, as well as the *Battlefield* series for EA.





» Paul's first issue of *Zzap!64* was number 35. It marked his big break in game journalism.

How were duties on the magazine doled out?

Everyone did everything. Apart from adventure games and strategy games, which had their own columns. I remember that if we got a simulation game, like a flight sim, I would probably be the one they would give it to. I was very slow as a writer, because I'd write something and then keep rewriting it. I think I drove Julian mad making him wait for copy, but I was easily distracted – I mean, I was sat next to two Commodore 64s with access to the latest games, so what could I do?

Can you tell us about the impact Julian's departure had on the team at *Zzap!64*?

Julian was editing *Zzap!* and Steve Jarratt was editing *Crash* when they had a bit of a falling out with the management. So, they kind of left and we were all a bit shellshocked, because they were key fixtures and part of the heart and soul of Newsfield. This was the summer of 1988. Editorship of *Zzap!* passed to Gordon Houghton, and we had a small team of Gordon, me and Kati Hamza who was doing the adventure column as Chuck Vomit The Troll. We also hired two staff writers, Maff Evans and Warren Lapworth. Things were okay because we did what Jaz had wanted to and added in more Amiga. And that's when *Zzap!64* became *Zzap!64 Amiga*.

“My friend got a Commodore 64 and showed me *High Noon* by Ocean and *Spy Vs Spy*, and I just couldn't believe it. The music, the graphics, everything was amazing”

PAUL GLANCEY



» Paul celebrating Paul Davies' birthday with Eddy Lawrence (Radion Automatic), Dave Kelsall and Oz Browne.



» Here's Paul attending a MicroProse press event with the likes of Julian Rignall. This was all the way back in 1990.

You would later reunite with Julian on *CVG*. Tell us about that.

At the start of December 1988, Julian called me and asked if I'd like to interview for a staff writer job on *CVG*, as Matt Bielby was leaving – and he went on to do lots of interesting things at different publishers. I thought surely I couldn't survive life in London? But I went anyway. Cheekily, because of course there was this rivalry between EMAP and Newsfield, Eugene Lacey sent my offer letter via fax to the Newsfield office. I'm told the Newsfield management were furious.

What was it like at EMAP and how did it differ to Newsfield?

It was fun at EMAP, and I did feel like I had joined the big league a bit. Lots of interesting console games to play, which I had sort of had a whiff of but not really seen very much of. But again, me and Julian were back together – it was amazing to be there with him on *CVG*. Eugene Lacey, the editor, was a lovely guy. It was a small team, just the three of us with a couple of freelancers. I was there about a year and then Eugene left. Julian swiftly moved into the editor's seat and Graham Taylor, who had edited *Sinclair User*, became publisher. Under Julian's direction the

My FAVOURITE GAMING MAG

“I have to say *Zzap!64* because without it I'd be nowhere. It was a great magazine. I loved it and was a big fan of the magazine before I started writing for it. I used to love reading all the gossipy stuff they used to put in there and I just loved my Commodore 64 – it was everything to me. It was my dream job and working there was one of the best times of my life.”



— I REMEMBER WHEN —

SONIC LOCKDOWN

“Tom Guise was *MegaTech*'s staff writer and he was mad on Sonic. In 1992, Sega had sent us *Sonic 2* ROMs for review and when I arrived for work one day they were gone from my desk drawer. I was freaking out. Then Tom ambles up, late as usual, and pulls them out of his bag. He had taken these super-valuable chips home to play after hours.”

I REMEMBER WHEN

FEDERATION OF FREE GRADERS

"Gremlin's *Federation Of Free Traders* was getting great reviews, but I was an *Elite* fan and thought it was a pretender to the throne, so I got all het-up and gave it a roasting in a four-page *CVG* review. Gremlin weren't impressed, but I think they saved their ire for *The Games Machine* who had put the FOFT logo on their cover with a massive 'NO!' stamped across it."



» Paul and Julian Rignall have remained close friends ever since those early *Zzap!*64 days.



» *MegaTech* retained the review style of Paul's previous mags – putting the reviewers' personalities, as well as opinions, on its pages.

BEST PRESS TRIP

EUROPEAN VIDEO GAMES CHAMPIONSHIP

Surprisingly, when you consider how many magazines he's written for, Paul never went on many press trips as a games journalist. There are a few he recalls, including one that saw him show off his game-playing skills on an international stage. "I remember a MicroProse press trip, which was nearly all the UK press – certainly a lot of the editors and deputy editors – going on an action sports weekend," remembers Paul. "I think my most memorable though, if you can call this a press trip, was when Julian and I went to Paris to be part of the European Video Games Championship in 1989. US Gold arranged it, and it was three teams – one from the UK, one from Spain and another from France. For the UK team they had brought along Stuart Campbell, who at the time was doing a fanzine before writing for *Amiga Power*. There was also a lad called Simon Hadlington and an arcade champion, Martin Deems. Each team picked one game and we picked *Super Mario Bros*. Julian had taught me how to get a good score, so I jumped in to play it. I'm pleased to say we won the day for the UK."



► *Mean Machines* section of the mag blossomed and then eventually became its own thing.

What was the relationship like between *Mean Machines* and *CVG* back then?

Mean Machines and *CVG* were at the same end of a room. *Mean Machines* was a couple of guys; *CVG* was three guys, so we'd constantly be talking about stuff and sharing opinions about things. Saying stuff like, "Can you write a comment for this because we haven't got time." So, there was me, Richard Leadbetter and a lad called Rob Swan on *CVG*. Julian had moved across to run *Mean Machines*, and I had become associate editor of *CVG*. Richard then moved over too and then Paul Rand, who had previously worked on *Zzap!*, joined us on *CVG*.

Tell us about *MegaTech*, and how the idea to launch a Mega Drive-only magazine came about?

By the summer of 1991 I had been the

“At the end of the call, I asked who I was talking to and the voice said, “It’s Julian Rignall.” I put the phone down and ran around the room”

PAUL GLANCEY

associate editor on *CVG* for about a year and was getting stressed because there was so much to cover. One day I was in a taxi with Julian, on the way to Mirrorsoft, and I said, "Why don't we do a Mega Drive magazine about game tips?" I was thinking it would be like those cool Japanese books full of maps and solutions. And he said why don't we just do a magazine? I think he proposed it to Graham.

The Complete Guide To Consoles specials that Julian led were big successes, so they suggested I test the water by editing *The Complete Guide To Mega Drive*.

What was that experience like? Quite challenging we imagine.

The idea with these guides was that we would have all the reviews already archived on floppy disk, so we'd just find them and reprint them. It never worked out like that. I was editing and rewriting old reviews on my PC at home, and searching for screenshots in our terrible 'library' (a filing cabinet with envelopes of photographs



» The first issue of *MegaTech*, the mag Paul was editor of after his time on *CVG*. Its look would evolve over the first few issues.



» Being a magazine that was dedicated to all things Mega Drive, *MegaTech* would review new tech as well as the latest games.



FUTURE CLASSIC

MINECRAFT

"That is a hard question. A classic to me is like *Tetris* – a landmark game and icon. I guess the nearest thing to that world domination is *Minecraft*, which is probably a really boring answer. I still play a lot of games. I'm playing a lot of *Call Of Duty* and *Helldivers 2* at the moment. Also, quite a bit of *Diablo IV*, but I still prefer *Diablo II*."

on film, that was frequently raided by every mag in the building). It was just me until we had about a week to finish. Graham lured an artist called Jeff Zie from a lucrative creative agency job to join EMAP and lay out the guide, with the promise of an art editorship on the ensuing magazine. Mark Patterson, a friendly youngster who had been on *Commodore User*, also came on as a writer. Jeff was coming in in the evenings while he worked out his notice to lay out the guide. It was a nightmare, and very rushed, but from that we launched *MegaTech*.

Tell us about those first few issues of *MegaTech*, were there any major teething problems involved?

I had no proper plan for how to make it. *Mean Machines* was the first magazine I'd seen at EMAP that did a dummy issue before it released. There was none of that with *MegaTech*. The first issue of *MegaTech* didn't know what it was supposed to look like. There were some slight similarities with the guide, the chequered backgrounds and a couple of the same typefaces I recall, but that was it. Between issue 1 to 4 you can kind of see how it would change from month to month. We were also the first mag in the building (apart from *ACE*) to use Macs and video-grabbing tech instead of a camera for screenshots, so there was all that to work out.

How did you find editing *MegaTech* compared to *CVG*?

Being editor on *MegaTech* was initially easier as I only had a single format to cover. I could focus

more on individual games and what was good on the Mega Drive. Those first few issues though, we really struggled to book adverts. That's why those early issues are very editorial-heavy. Sega, or Virgin Mastertronic who were marketing the Mega Drive in the UK, weren't interested in advertising and the best we could do was cajole them into paying for advertorial stuff with us. I guess we were doing all the work already – big four-page spreads on *Desert Strike* – so companies like Electronic Arts didn't need to spend on advertising. I think *MegaTech* did OK in terms of sales, but it wasn't a big earner in terms of advertising revenue.

What did you do after *MegaTech*? Did you move on to other gaming mags?

I did *MegaTech* for a couple of years, which burned me out, so I went freelance, writing reviews and tips guides. I was doing OK for a while but there was always the old freelancer's problem of getting paid on time – or at all. I needed a regular job, so I ended up on a Macintosh gaming magazine, published by IDG, called *Mac Action*. IDG published a magazine called *Macworld*, and they wanted to cash in on the boom in the Mac games market that would come from the launch of the Apple Pippin. Of course, the Pippin was a bust so it was no surprise when that mag folded after a year, and I had to return to freelancing. When my friend Paul Davies took over the editorship of *CVG* I was happy to help out the old mag, and I wrote

“It was fun at EMAP, and I did feel like I had joined the big league a bit. Lots of interesting console games to play, which I had sort of had a whiff of but not really seen very much of”

PAUL GLANCEY

I REMEMBER WHEN

DEUS EXPERT

"At Eidos I was given a beta build of *Deus Ex* to review. It was supposed to have realistic systems in it so you didn't have to follow strict solutions to solve problems, but when I couldn't open a wooden door with a rocket launcher I was unimpressed and said so. My opinions went unheeded and somehow Warren Spector went on to massive success (laughs)."

BEST INTERVIEW

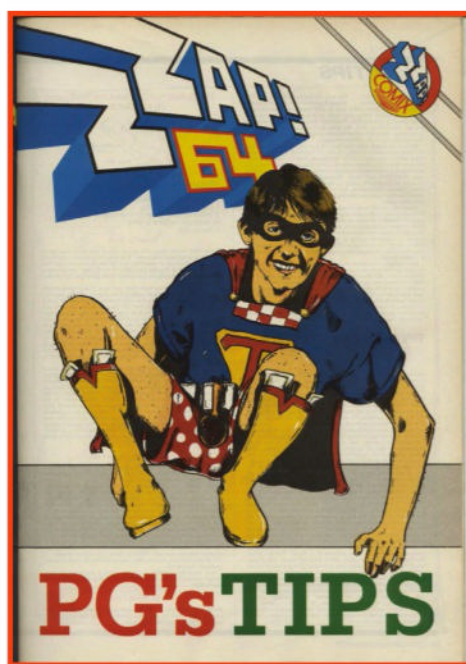
JEFF MINTER

During the days of the Konix Multisystem, Paul got to meet Jeff Minter at his house on a scorching hot day when the gaming legend was busy working on a legendary unreleased game for the system. "The PR guy drove me to Jeff's farmhouse in the Welsh countryside where he was making *Attack Of The Mutant Camels* '89. I don't think he was that happy that we were there; we were probably interrupting his work. It was a really hot day, and I remember this very well-spoken, be-suited PR gent asking Jeff for a drink. Maybe he was expecting a chilled bottle of Perrier, but Jeff picked up a half-empty two-litre bottle of Coke off the floor next to his devkit and handed it to him to awkwardly swig. I ran into Jeff again at the Konix press event at their factory in Ebbw Vale. He had to pose in the 'moving' Konix chair pointing the Konix gun at the screen, so I took his picture. Fortunately, Jeff persists, but that was the last I ever saw of the Konix."

I REMEMBER WHEN

SNARK SUITED

"At *Zzap!* I ended up doing the tips column, which naturally became PG's Tips! In the September 1988 issue I had to do a 32-page tips special and it opened with a full-page drawing of me in a comedy superhero costume, complete with dangling tea bags and strainer. Roger Kean saw it and wanted to have that costume made so I could wear it on the Newsfield stand at the upcoming PC Show at Earl's Court. I politely declined."



» When Paul took over the tips section in *Zzap!64*, it became PG's Tips, and he became a superhero... of sorts.

► *The Complete History Of Computer And Video Games* for their 100th issue. But freelancing still wasn't a steady income, and in 1998 I suddenly found myself involved in game publishing and development.

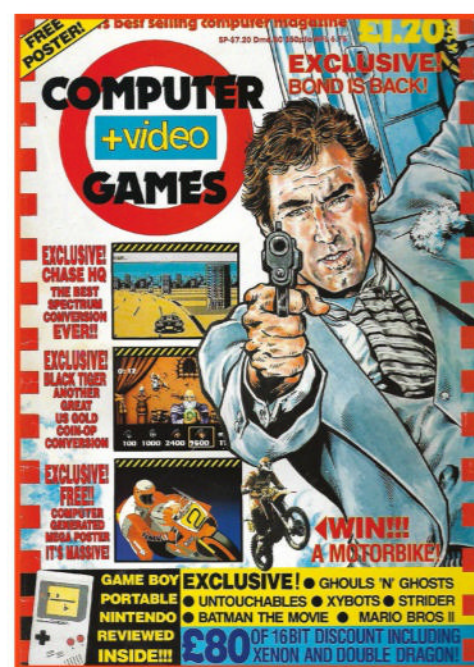
What led you into game development, Paul?

Eidos Interactive was formed principally from the remains of Domark. And whenever we'd do stuff with Domark on the magazines we'd work with their development manager, John Kavanagh, who I stayed friendly with. One of my freelance gigs had been Develop – an industry newsletter at the time set up by Steve Cooke, the guy behind *ACE* magazine. I made a complete arse of it because I had only ever written for players and had no idea what was interesting to game developers. So I would ring up John and ask him what I should write about. One day he invited me to work as their in-house reviewer to look at their games and tell them what worked. So I did that for a year or two, and this was when Eidos was publishing the first *Deus Ex*, *Resident Evil – Code: Veronica*, *TimeSplitters*, and the *Daikatana* drama was going on. Working the other side of the business was revelatory. I discovered how little I knew about videogames, even after ten years writing about them.

What was your role at Eidos? What sort of things were you doing?

I visited developers who pitched Eidos their

“I was sat next to two Commodore 64s with access to the latest games, so it was easy to be drawn away from work”
PAUL GLANCEY



» After *Zzap!64*, Paul left Newsfield to reunite with Julian Rignall at EMAP and work on CVG.

games for publication. One of those guys was Alex Ward, who had just joined Criterion Games from Acclaim. He had two PlayStation 2 games to pitch. One was *Stunt Squad*, which was kind of a sequel to the Dreamcast hoverboarding game *TrickStyle*. The other was called *Shiny Red Car*, which later became *Burnout*.

Afterwards, Alex told me he remembered me from magazines and asked me to work with Criterion to help direct their games.

You left Eidos to join Criterion. What projects did you work on there?

When I joined, Alex was focussed on *Shiny Red Car* and I worked on *Stunt Squad*, which evolved into a game called *AirBlade*, that Sony published. Then there was interest from Electronic Arts. They had a label called EA Sports BIG, for extreme sports games like *SSX*, and asked if we wanted to update *Skate Or Die!*. To dodge the competition from *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, we pitched them an *SSX*-style downhill racing game with skaters and tricks. At one point we threw in rollerbladers. That didn't pan out, so we came up with a skating action game in a city where you could get off your board, pull ramps around, impress pedestrians and get chased by cops. This was before *Tony Hawk's Underground*. That didn't pan out either so we ended up trying a concept about the history of skateboarding – which was a bit desperate. EA binned that and got us to prototype a *Jackass* game which went nowhere.



» Paul has worked on some iconic racing franchises, including the *Burnout* series at Criterion and the underrated *Split/Second* for Black Rock Studios.

Did you ever contribute to the *Burnout* series?

Alex's *Burnout* team had big success with the first game and the sequel, and were trying to figure out what to do next. I was with Alex one day and said why don't we do *Burnout*, but the focus is bumping people off the road during the racing. I sort of gave him this design document where they were called Knockouts, and he said, "No, no, we should call them Takedowns." And that became *Burnout 3: Takedown*, which was published by EA after they bought Criterion. The game did very well. It was rated highly and won loads of awards. That was a good time.

“I think MegaTech did OK in terms of sales, but it wasn't a big earner in terms of advertising revenue”

PAUL GLANCEY

You also worked on *Split/Second: Velocity* at Black Rock Studios, tell us about that.

After *Burnout Paradise* came out in 2009, my *Burnout* credentials got me hired by Black Rock. Apparently racing games were losing their appeal, so they wanted a racing/action game combo where you'd win by blowing up the track and the other racers. *Split/Second* was a great game, but it was ambitious and expensive to make because so much work went into getting the spectacular destruction to work. The game missed its original dates and ended up launching on the same day as *Red Dead Redemption*, and a week before Bizarre Creations' *Blur*, so nobody bought it. People discovered it since, on Xbox Game Pass and PlayStation+, and it gets talked about as a lost classic.

Before we wrap up, are there any other notable games you've been involved with?

After *Split/Second* shipped I worked with Ubisoft Reflections on *Driver: San Francisco*. On my first day, the lead designer was telling me about the car-hopping mechanic and I was like, "Whaaat?" I thought it was mad, but when it shipped, people thought it was crazy fun. That game still looks great, running at 60 frames. I then went back to EA and helped with the Wii U version of *Need for Speed: Most Wanted*. I also worked on *Star Wars Battlefront II*, *Battlefield Firestorm* and *Battlefield V*. These days I'm a producer for hire, helping indie game developers with quality control. Still reviewing games after all these years. *

PROUDEST MOMENT

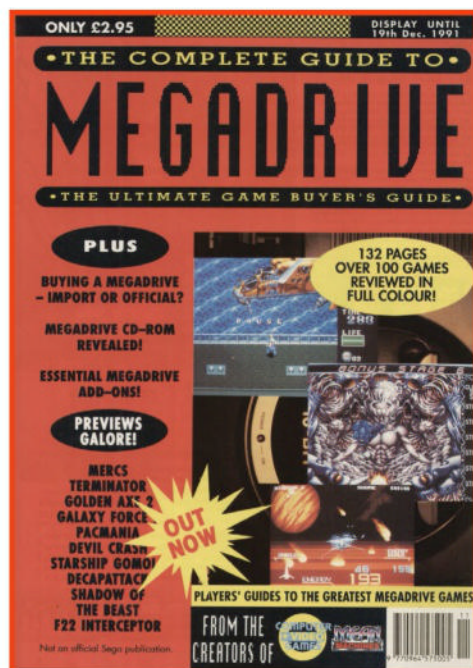
"Walking into the Zzap!64 office for the first time and realising that I was now one of the team. It's just nuts now when I think about it. It was like going to work on *Star Wars*, or something like that. There's George Lucas stood over there next to Mark Hamill who's rehearsing his lines. All the people you had read about and felt almost unreal to you in their natural environment, being friendly to you. It was just the most amazing thing ever. I don't think I have ever felt anything like it. That was the thing I'm proudest of in terms of magazines. There are other things in games development that I have been very proud of – I'm proud of all the games I've worked on, but there's not much that beats that moment that launched the rest of my life."



I REMEMBER WHEN

SCREAM GRABBING

"At EMAP, we were getting on board with video-grabbing hardware and used a system called Radius Theatrics, which was expensive and not designed for that kind of work at all. Everything had to be lined-doubled so all the shots looked chunky, but you did have the Holy Grail thing of being able to pause the game whenever you wanted."



» Paul wrote *The Complete Guide To Mega Drive* to test the appetite for a Mega Drive-only mag. Its design would influence *MegaTech*.

» [Amiga] *Wizkid* is incredible to look at, but it's not as confusing as it looks to play.



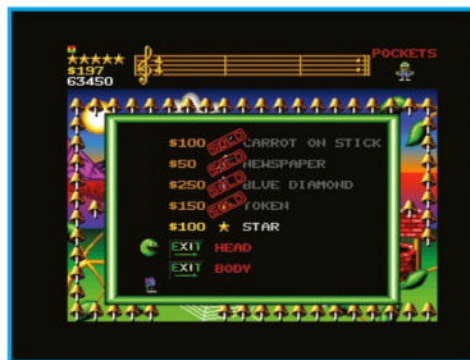
GAMES WEREN'T CHEAP IN THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES, AND WITH POCKET MONEY AT A PREMIUM, COVERMOUNTS WERE THE BEST WAY FOR PLAYERS TO EXPERIENCE EVERYTHING AVAILABLE. FOR COVERMOUNT CORNER'S DEBUT WE'LL BE LOOKING AT ISSUE 13 OF AMIGA POWER. A NUMBER UNLUCKY FOR SOME, BUT NOT FOR AMIGA OWNERS

WORDS BY JAMES KONIK

AMIGA POWER #13

THIS MONTH IN MAY 1992

In 1992, the Amiga was still in its prime in the UK. The A600 was just out and the SNES had just joined the Mega Drive in challenging the Amiga's dominance. That May, *Amiga Power* readers were in for a treat too. The magazine was a year old, and it marked the occasion with a list of the Amiga's top 100 games. There were also two coverdisks including demos of some of the greatest Amiga games of all time. The first disk, from Sensible Software, featured demos of *Wizkid* and the mighty *Sensible Soccer*, while the second featured *Pinball Dreams*. And that was far from all.



» [Amiga] The partially stocked shop gives you a hint of more to come in the final game.

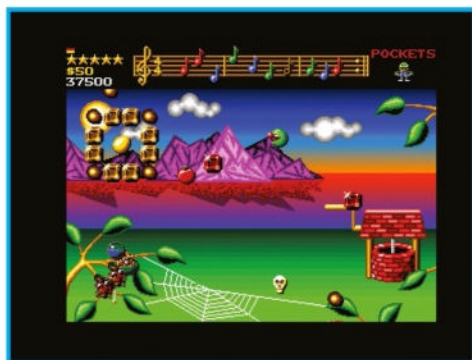
THE MAIN EVENT: WIZKID

Sensible Software was big news at the start of 1992, but not as big as it would be. *Sensible Soccer* wasn't out, and *Cannon Fodder* was still a year away, but the developer still had a string of hits behind it, including the time-spanning strategy game *Mega-lo-Mania* and the older 8-bit classic, *Wizball*.

Its *Amiga Power* coverdisk was a compact demonstration of the studio's brilliance, and went a long way to establishing its reputation as the madcap geniuses of British software. Top billing on the disk went, not to *Sensible Soccer*, but to *Wizkid*. A sequel of sorts to *Wizball*, *Wizkid* ramps up the insanity and includes an unpredictable medley of gameplay styles.

Described in the magazine as "genreless" it's a tough game to classify, but have a look at those screenshots. It's a riot of colour and action, with your character, a mostly disembodied head, flying around the screen in front of psychedelic backdrops and roving enemies. *Wizkid* charges into blocks, knocking them into the baddies and gathering the paint they drop to make notes, which form tunes. Trust us, it makes more sense when you play. It's anarchic, charming and fun.

The demo itself gives you a generous chunk of game, letting you try out a few levels, do a bit of shopping, and briefly reunite your head with your body. There's a full tutorial, which is much needed



» [Amiga] The clown nose is one of many useful items Sensible Software's game, letting you juggle objects.



» [Amiga] The world map shows off the strangeness of *Wizkid's* world.



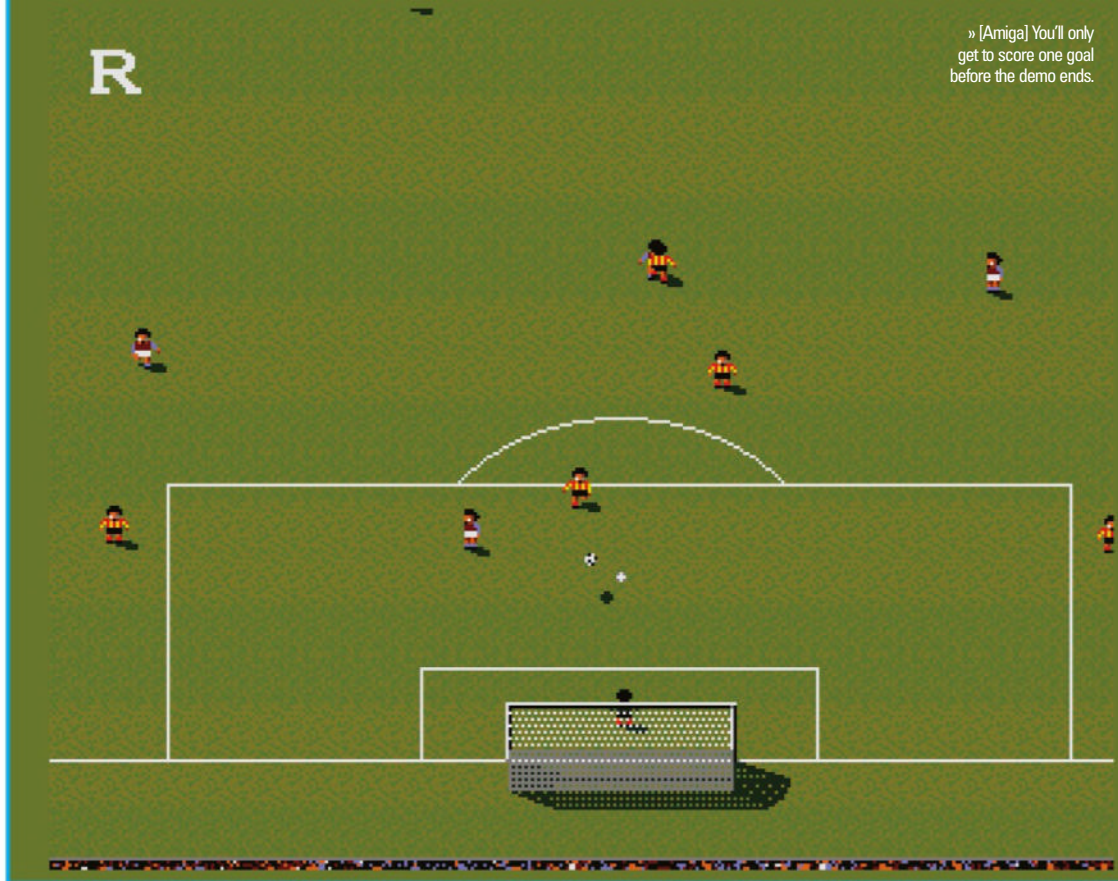
» [Amiga] Taking a corner. You'll need to be skilled to score from here.

as it's quite a confusing game to start with. The finished product would arrive in time for *Amiga Power's* July issue, getting 91% from Mark Ramshaw, who called it "the most refreshing thing in years". *Wizkid* doesn't quite stand up with Sensible's best titles, but it remains well worth a look for its originality and sense of fun.

PLAY THIS NEXT: SENSIBLE SOCCER

The Sensible disk also gave players their first glimpse of the best soccer game of all time.

With its tiny sprites and ambient crowd noise, *Sensible Soccer* is here in most, if not all of its glory with after-touch, replays and that magic gameplay all intact. *Sensi* does take time to reveal its brilliance though, and the demo's a brief affair, with no AI, and games ending after one goal. New players would need a while to master the game's tricky ball control, and learn to beat the keeper. *Sensible Soccer* would go on to greatness, scoring 93% from Stuart Campbell a couple of issues later before evolving into *Sensible World Of Soccer*, arguably the Amiga's best game. ★



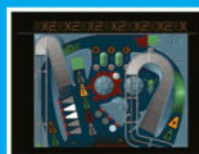
» [Amiga] You'll only get to score one goal before the demo ends.

COVERMOUNT HIGHLIGHTS

THE BEST OF THE REST

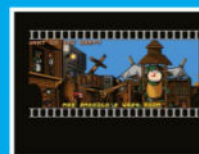
PINBALL DREAMS

■ Another great series made its debut on this disk. *Pinball Dreams*, by future *Battlefield* developer Digital Illusions, was the product of demoscene coders turned pro. The demo itself gives you the complete *Nightmare* table, though it locks you out after five minutes.



HOOK SLIDESHOW

There's also a slideshow of early screenshots from Ocean's graphic adventure, *Hook*. There's only six images, plus a couple of logos. *Hook* was a decent enough game, but LucasArts' *Monkey Island 2* was also just round the corner.



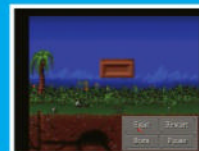
CAMPAIGN

■ *Campaign* is a 3D WWII tank game letting you take a fleet of tanks into battle. It's tough to figure out the demo, but a quick tip – right click the bullet to load the gun, and unpause the game to fire it.



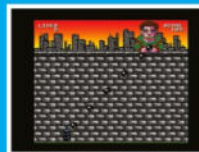
SIM BRICK

■ *Sensi* legend Stoo Cambridge pulled an all-nighter on his first day of work to bring us *Sim Brick*. Mocking all those games with Sim in the title, you get to exist, view your stats and bask in its silliness.



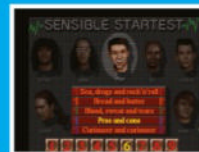
MAD BOMBER

This is a short, sweet public domain game. You desperately move from left to right to catch the bombs dropped by the increasingly frantic mad bomber, whose victorious cackle will haunt your dreams. It's certainly worth a few goes!



SENSIBLE STARTEST

■ *Sensible Startest* lets you interview the *Sensi* team by picking from a range of categorised questions. There are masses of these and you can't repeat any, so listen carefully. It's not always clear what they say, but it's a fun bit of madness nonetheless.



武者 ALESTE

THE MAKING OF

WITH AMAZING ART DESIGN, IMPRESSIVE PROGRAMMING AND A SPECTACULAR SPEED-METAL SOUNDTRACK, MUSHA ALESTE ON SEGA'S MEGA DRIVE IS A TIMELESS CLASSIC. WE TALKED TO ART DIRECTOR KAZUYUKI NAKASHIMA ABOUT ITS CREATION AND THE VARIOUS STRUGGLES THE TEAM FACED IN THE PROCESS

WORDS BY THOMAS NICKEL



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:**
TOAPLAN
- » **DEVELOPER:**
COMPILE
- » **PLATFORM:**
MEGA DRIVE
- » **RELEASED:**
1990
- » **GENRE:**
SHMUP

From the early Eighties onwards, Japan's Game Centers were the breeding ground for some of the best, most influential and – most importantly – fun shooting games of all time. *Space Invaders*, *Xevious*, *Gradius*, *Darius*, *R-Type*... the list goes on and on. Still, not every company at the time chose the arcade format for its games; Compile, founded as Programmers-3 Inc in 1982, focussed on Japanese home computers like the NEC PC-88, the older MSX and, surprisingly enough, Sega's SG-1000, the predecessor to the more successful Mark III/ Master System. While games like *Gulkave* (1986) and *Zanac* (1987) were graphically outmatched by their technically more advanced game-center-competition, Compile still made a name for itself with smartly designed, well playing shooters and often managed to punch far above its weight.

One game proved especially popular: *Aleste*, released in 1988 for the MSX and

Sega Mark III, brought to the West as *Power Strike*, impressed with fantastic graphics, fun weapons and long, challenging stages. It shouldn't come as a big surprise to learn that Compile also produced the spin-off *Aleste Gaiden* and a full-blown sequel called *Aleste 2* for the MSX in 1989, shortly after Sega's powerful 16-bit Mega Drive was released in Japan.

Needless to say, while the Mega Drive couldn't really dent the dominance of Nintendo's Famicom and also struggled against the slightly older PC Engine, Sega's powerful, yet affordable machine was an enticing prospect for ambitious programmers and artists. One of those is Kazuyuki Nakashima, who recalls the origins of Compile's first steps on Sega's new console. "Initially, the programmer, Mr (Yuichi) Toyama, and I started developing a game named *Aleste MD*, a sequel to the very first *Aleste*. But we were still young and lacked the skills to really take on the project.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ZANAC

PLATFORM: MSX

RELEASED: 1986

ALESTE

PLATFORM: SEGA MARK III

RELEASED: 1988

PUYO PUYO (PICTURED)

PLATFORM: MSX, FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM

RELEASED: 1991



» [Mega Drive] The first stage consists of a chase over the sea and many traditional buildings with heavy weapons.



» [Mega Drive] Collecting little power-up pods grants additional drones and enhances pilot Ellinor's main weapon.



» [Mega Drive] Spectacular tech: the floor in stage 3 drops into a deep ravine, the parallax effect adds some amazing depth.

So we were forced to change our plans and we didn't have much time."

So the plans for a direct 16-bit sequel to the first *Aleste* were out, and instead an all-new project was started, inspired by the pop-cultural intake of its creator. "Mr Toyama, and I are from the same generation, which was strongly influenced by the anime *Mobile Suit Gundam*," explains Nakashima. "The manga *Cobra* by Buichi Terasawa and the special effects film *Future Ninja* also had a big influence on us." Inspiration like this made the team abandon the genre's stereotypical spaceship/sci-fi aesthetics and go for bulky mechs and a mixture of mediaeval Japanese aesthetics and high-tech structures, a wonderfully unique setting far removed from classical genre tropes. Indeed, it was one of Nakashima's sketches of a character wearing a traditional Noh-mask, that really helped the team focus and find a direction for their game. The name of the project: *MUSHA Aleste* – the prefix 武者 meaning Warrior.

Looking back, Nakashima considers the whole project a lucky opportunity. "We were very lucky to get the green light for the slightly crazy *MUSHA Aleste* project," we're told. "We were free from the pressure of making a 'real' *Aleste* successor and we realised what we thought was cool. I think it was actually more fun than hard work."

It's this sense of joy, a young team just doing what they thought was fun and cool that can still be keenly felt when playing *MUSHA Aleste* today. "We were a bit rebellious and went against company policy from time to time," Nakashima explains. "We didn't use the Compile fanfare that was always played during an extra life

because it didn't fit into the world of our game, and we changed the Compile logo on the title screen because we found the bright pink colour too pop. It was our great perseverance that helped us to create a new, non-traditional *Aleste* game."

Perseverance was certainly needed, as well as communication with experienced colleagues, a process that not only inspired *MUSHA Aleste*, but also other games in

production at the time, as Nakashima remembers. "I had the least experience in game production of the whole team, so I got a lot of advice from my experienced colleagues who were working on *Gunhed*, *Aleste* and the

MSX version of *Aleste 2*. These were also developed around the same time. My idea of a boss that was an aeroplane overgrown with plants was included in *Aleste 2*."

Still, time was short and a lot of work was still to be done, but luckily, the team around Yuichi Toyama and Kazuyuki Nakashima had the clear advantage of working on really powerful hardware.

Despite the capabilities of Sega's console, and like probably every developer in the world, Nakashima still would have liked a bit more power. "We had no real problems with the memory or specifications of the Mega Drive, but we were unhappy with the number of colour palettes: two for the sprites and two for the backgrounds weren't enough for us," he laments. "If we'd had one more, we could have made a special damage palette..."

MUSHA Aleste's programmer Toyama worked some real magic in the meantime. Using vertical parallax scrolling, he created ▶

"I HAD THE LEAST EXPERIENCE IN GAME PRODUCTION OF THE WHOLE TEAM!"
KAZUYUKI NAKASHIMA

TRIPLE THREAT

MUSHA ALESTE'S EPIC UPGRADEABLE WEAPONS

BLAZING BEAM

■ While starting out rather meekly, the green laser gains a lot of power by doubling and seriously increasing in size. It's a very useful offensive weapon with high damage values and a useful piercing-effect, but little spread.



VANISHING BUSTER

■ When picking up brownish-red capsules, Ellinor can use missiles. They start out slow, but have a good spread and a rapidly growing area of effect. When fully upgraded, they create black holes that draw in enemies.



DEFENSIVE DETONATOR

■ Blue spheres circling Ellinor's mech protect it from pesky enemy bullets and even damage foes they manage to touch. With more upgrades, they get bigger and also gain more offensive capabilities by circling and shooting straight ahead.



KAZUYUKI NAKASHIMA

■ In *MUSHA Aleste*, Kazuyuki Nakashima was responsible for its art design. His most recent work was graphic designer for M2's *GG Aleste 3*.





» [Mega Drive] Many mechanical enemies like mid-boss Araki have faces, giving the game a certain unsettling vibe.

► a spectacularly deep ravine in stage three and added enemy sprites moving up from its depths – it's an incredible sight that still holds up today. It's memorable, often jaw-dropping moments like this that define *MUSHA Aleste* today. Chasing a giant, moveable pagoda through the ocean, sneaking through narrow, moving passages, flying through clouds and lightning or fighting a boss that's hiding a demonic face behind a smiling Noh-mask... while not overly challenging, *MUSHA Aleste* does a fantastic job at chasing players through one spectacular setpiece after another,

However, while the team enjoyed more freedom than many others at the time, it wasn't always easy to convince some of the higher-ups of every idea the team wanted to execute. "It was a time when gaming hardware was improving technically, and there were many games made by a generation that grew up with mecha

anime," Nakashima continues. "I think it was during this time that *MUSHA Aleste* was able to evolve into what it is today. During the planning meetings at the company, the older generation didn't really understand the idea, but our generation was fully behind it. Perhaps the line between jokes and seriousness is a little different between these generations."

Nobody felt that more keenly than composer Toshiaki Sakoda. After abandoning early concepts and terms like 'edo-metal', Sakoda decided on a wild speed-metal score, which he first played on actual instruments. Wanting to avoid the common mechanical sounds found in many shooting games, he programmed the Mega Drive sound chip to match his metal

ambitions, while paying close attention to the number of voices used, so there would be no collision or channel-drops due to sound effects. However, when Sakoda was almost done, some company leaders got involved and demanded a soundtrack more fitting for the Japanese aesthetics; Sakoda acquiesced and wrote a track using traditional instruments – and after a demo of the new track, the higher-ups luckily agreed to go with Sakoda's previous metal score.

After a short, but intense development phase, *MUSHA Aleste* was finally released on 21 December 1990 with shooter-veteran Toaplan serving as its publisher. Four months later, in March 1991, the game also made its way to North America via publisher Seismic under a slightly changed



» [Mega Drive] The sixth stage mostly consists of the giant battleship Kirirasame, Ellinor destroys its countless turrets and other weapons.

BOSS RUSH

GOOD SHOOTERS NEED GREAT BOSSES – AND MUSHA ALESTE DELIVERS



IKAKARO

■ After a brief first encounter, Ellinor chases this giant pagoda on treads through the whole first level.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Ikakaro starts firing from hidden turrets. Once these are destroyed, the skull on the pagoda's roof shoots waves of fireballs at you. Evade the patterns and destroy it.



HAINOUE

■ A giant pair of mounted flamethrowers with a face in the middle guards the end of the second stage.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Evade the flames and shoot the guns. Once these are destroyed, Hainoue increases the frequency of its secondary weapon, a strong Defensive Detonator helps a lot.



KABUKI Z

■ This red mecha attacks early in stage 3 and returns at the level's end – bigger, meaner and more dangerous than ever.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Its first form is bulky, but rather defensive. Once the big armor is off, it moves a lot faster. Don't get hit by its tail!



YUKIWARU MK-5

■ This mayor is a compact spaceship with a face in front with a huge arsenal of missiles and a nasty, green surprise.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: At first, Yukiwaru MK-5 is only vulnerable when firing its missiles. After a while, it splits into two and attacks with your own green laser!



» [Mega Drive] Level four takes place in a thunderstorm, with Ellinor steadily rising through the clouds.



» [Mega Drive] After this enemy falls through the clouds, his sidekicks lift it up again and the battle continues.



» [Mega Drive] The final boss is guarded by various powerful mid-bosses but overall, the challenge is quite approachable.

name: Seismic dropped *Aleste* from the title and so *MUSHA Aleste* became *MUSHA* – a rather smart, little acronym already found in the Japanese manual, meaning Metallic Uniframe Super Hybrid Armor. Europe, meanwhile, did not get any official release until much, much later. Still, thanks to its unique name and theme, great presentation and an enthusiastic import scene, the game still enjoyed a certain level of prominence there.

When *MUSHA Aleste* was released, the initial reception was surprisingly mixed. Many players and reviewers really enjoyed the smooth action, the original setting and the excellent presentation, but not everybody was convinced. While Japanese magazine *Famitsu* scoring a traditional shooting game a slightly tepid score of 27/40 is not unusual, some Western outlets were unusually critical, with journalists like

Richard Leadbetter in *CVG* criticising the game for its lack of originality and challenge – an opinion that can certainly also be attributed to the sheer amount of shooting games hitting stores on a monthly basis on consoles and home computers at that time.

Today, however, *MUSHA Aleste* is considered a beloved classic and one of the best shooters of the 16-bit era. It was first brought to Europe via the Wii Virtual Console, found a place on the Japanese Mega Drive Mini and is today easily playable on Nintendo's Switch for all subscribers to Nintendo's Switch Online Expansion Pack. Still, the original cartridge is a prized collector's item, regularly fetching dizzying sums on the second-hand market,

For art director Kazuyuki Nakashima, meanwhile, *MUSHA Aleste* was an impressive start to an equally impressive

"WE WERE UNHAPPY WITH THE NUMBER OF COLOUR PALETTES"
KAZUYUKI NAKASHIMA

career in shooting games, during which he always kept his sense of slightly unusual settings and aircraft. "In the projects I was involved in, there were no classic spaceships even after *MUSHA Aleste*," he explains. "In the two *Spriggan* games there was a humanoid battle mech, in *Mahou Daisakusen/Sorcer Striker* there was an armoured fighter with Western-style weapons, in *Soukyugurentai/Terra Diver* it was a strangely shaped space plane without a canopy, in *Battle Garegga* there were propeller planes and in *Batrider* it was an airbike." And even today, Nakashima can draw from his early works. "My experience from the *MUSHA Aleste* days came in handy when developing my latest project, *GG Aleste 3* in 2020. There were also a lot of reactions to my illustration for *MUSHA Aleste*'s 30th birthday, which was published on Twitter at the end of the year. I would like to thank all those who still love this game." ★



UTSUNOMIYA

■ *MUSHA Aleste*'s most iconic boss first appears wearing a white Noh-mask. At the end, you will see its real face.

HOW TO BEAT: In the first phase, Utsunomiya attacks using its hands. Once its hands and mask are gone, it relies on target-seeking missiles, which can luckily be destroyed.



DIRE 51

■ Ellinor met this black mech a few times before, but this time, the mighty foe means business.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: First it attacks with blue spheres. Once the weapon is destroyed, it goes for a nasty laser-whip that splits up into even more spheres.



AYANO KOUJI

■ Ellinor's final obstacle before facing the last boss is this huge and intimidating machine that protects its own weak point.

HOW TO BEAT THEM: Ayano Kouji is huge, but not too difficult. Destroy the spawning cannons quickly and aim for the core in the middle.



FINAL BOSS

■ The final boss, the core of the supercomputer is fought in two phases. And then there is one last surprise...

HOW TO BEAT: In the first phase, you have to destroy the two green spheres while avoiding the huge globe, which you take out in the second phase. Good luck!

16-BIT KONAMI GAMES

KONAMI WAS ON FIRE DURING THE NINETIES, RELEASING A SOLID NUMBER OF HITS ACROSS THE SNES AND MEGA DRIVE. HERE ARE TEN WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

■ It may just be a reboot of the original NES classic, but it's a reboot that is filled with memorable boss encounters, some genuinely mesmerising setpieces (that spinning tunnel, travelling across the swinging chandeliers) and plenty of Mode 7 trickery. While its graphics can sometimes feel overly gaudy, it boasts one of the finest soundtracks you'll hear on the SNES.



AXELAY

■ While the SNES is often criticised for its weak shmup library, offerings like *Axelay* still prove said library shouldn't be ignored. A fusion of traditional side-on stages and thrilling into-the-screen levels, *Axelay* is not only a masterpiece of game design and challenging boss battles but also stands out due to its sensational aesthetics. It's criminal that the promised sequel never appeared.

SNATCHER

■ This sci-fi Mega-CD epic is now incredibly expensive, meaning many gamers won't have experienced it. That's a shame, because it's a wonderful slice of Hideo Kojima brilliance that's elevated by a strong visual style, rich storytelling and genuinely interesting characters. Konami is really missing a trick by not re-releasing this on modern systems.



JUMP OUT
HIT CLIFF
DRIVE INTO SANDPILE
PRESS BUTTON
PRAY TO GOD



PROBOTECTOR

■ Which 16-bit *Contra* game was better, *Probotector* or *Contra III: The Alien Wars*? The answer is they're both exceptional run-and-guns which push their respective consoles to the limits, which is why we've included both. *Probotector's* choice of different characters, energy bar system, branching paths and stronger focus on story help differentiate it from its SNES cousin.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES IV: TURTLES IN TIME

■ This adaptation of the popular coin-op may be lacking the original's four-player mode and its *Pizza Power* theme song, but don't let that put you off. There's still plenty to enjoy in Konami's SNES conversion, from its authentic-looking visual presentation, fast-paced gameplay, a brand-new Time Trial mode and retooled bonus stages. The Mega Drive's *Hyperstone Heist* is also worth seeking out, although both are rising in price.



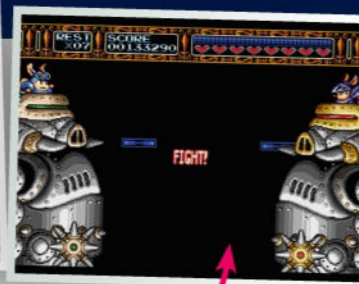
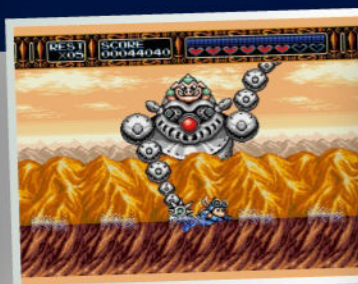
CASTLEVANIA: THE NEW GENERATION

■ Yes the final boss is an absolute pig to defeat, but this remains a highly enjoyable *Castlevania* adventure. Known as *Bloodlines* in the US and *Vampire Killer* in Japan, it's an excellent addition to the series with some cool boss fights, lots of clever graphical effects and a surprisingly atmospheric soundtrack. Just be mindful that it's quite expensive to acquire nowadays.



PARODIUS

■ Granted, it's not as authentic as the later Saturn and PlayStation ports, but this is a 16-bit list so it gets a mention. Unlike the earlier *Gradius III* which was scuppered by slowdown, *Parodius* is a far more competent conversion, effortlessly capturing the wacky antics of the arcade original. It even adds a couple of new levels over its arcade brother.



ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES

■ This Mega Drive exclusive is one of the best action games to be found on the console and it's still a blast to play today. While it's technically impressive and an aural treat for the ears, it's the sheer imagination that's packed into the stage design and the game's inventive bosses that helps make it stand out compared to similar games on the console.



CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

■ Mode 7 and mayhem combine to create one of the most explosive action games to exist on Nintendo's 16-bit console. While it lacks the innovations of the later Mega Drive release of *Probotector*, it remains an essential jewel in the series' crown thanks to its dramatic score, jaw-dropping bosses and lots of graphical trickery. It's arguably the best run-and-gun to be found on the system.



TINY TOON ADVENTURES: BUSTER'S HIDDEN TREASURE

■ In a lot of ways this feels like Konami's answer to *Sonic The Hedgehog*, but it has enough of its own personality to stand out amongst the many Mega Drive platformers. As well as having solid controls, gorgeous animation and jaunty tunes, *Buster's Hidden Treasure* also benefits from memorable level design and a wealth of secrets to discover.



Super R-Type

SUPER BY NAME, BUT NOT BY NATURE

» RETROREVIVAL



» SNES » 1991 » IREM

Few Super Nintendo games disappointed me like *Super R-Type* did. I'd obviously read reviews of the game ahead of purchase and knew about its

slowdown, but I'd also played *Gradius III* on the SNES and assumed it would play out similar to that. I was rather wrong.

I'm not sure why *Super R-Type* struggled so much on the Super Nintendo, but man, it was disappointing to play. I absolutely adore the original *R-Type* and was a big fan of its sequel, so a game that promised to be an enhanced version of *R-Type II* with additional levels felt like an essential purchase to me.

Alas, I probably should have left the shooter on the shelf, because it was hard to justify the high import price and there was certainly nothing super about it. There's no denying that it's a great-looking game, easily capturing the distinctive look of the arcade original, but the game's speed simply kills it, particularly when you pull off your enhanced charge attack. Yes, there's a small argument to be made that the crippling slowdown can be used to your advantage to help weave through enemy patterns, but that feels like a lame counterpoint to the shooters that were happening on the Mega Drive at the time.

Nowadays, clever programmers have fixed many of the slowdown issues that plagued *Super R-Type* and similar games thanks to the SA-1 patch that proved to be so game-changing for the aforementioned *Gradius III*. Even if you fix the speed of *Super R-Type* though, it still does nothing to stop Irem's game from being an incredibly tough shooter. In fact, the unfair difficulty, along with that rampant slowdown put me off purchasing *R-Type III: The Third Lightning* for an absolute age, which is a mighty shame as it fixes many of the issues found in *Super R-Type*.

I can now appreciate Irem's game for what it is – a brave attempt to expand a popular arcade game for SNES owners, but as it has been over thirty years since I paid £60 for it, I'm not too surprised about how I feel now. Time really is a great healer. ★



THE RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO THE GAME GEAR

SEGA'S HANDHELD HARDWARE MAY NOT HAVE HIT THE HEIGHTS THE MEGA DRIVE DID, BUT IT OFFERED PLENTY OF FUN ON THE GO FOR PLAYERS IN THE EARLY NINETIES. WE TAKE A LOOK BACK AT SOME OF THE SYSTEM'S BEST EXCUSES TO BURN THROUGH A PACK OF BATTERIES

WORDS BY NICK THORPE

When Sega introduced the Game Gear to Japanese players in the autumn of 1990, it was the last entrant into the original handheld console war.

With a clear advantage over the greyscale display of Nintendo's Game Boy and more developer support than Atari could muster for the Lynx, it seemed to have a solid chance of success. While it was a frighteningly power-hungry piece of kit and ultimately fell well short of the sales the Game

Boy would generate, the Game Gear still found an appreciative audience of millions of players thanks to its colour screen and recognisable games.

The Game Gear's hardware is essentially based on that of the Master System, with some mild upgrades, while its market position meant that it received plenty of portable counterparts to Mega Drive games. Because of this, it can be easy to write Sega's portable platform off as a target for conversions and little more. While it certainly does have its

share of direct ports, there are plenty of games with interesting differences to their home-console counterparts and even some that only share their name. Of course it also has some very interesting exclusive games, especially when you look at import releases. With that in mind, we feel it's high time to take a closer look at a library that perhaps doesn't get the love it deserves, in order to highlight some of the best and most interesting games the Game Gear has to offer. ★



COLUMNS 1990

SEGA R&D 1

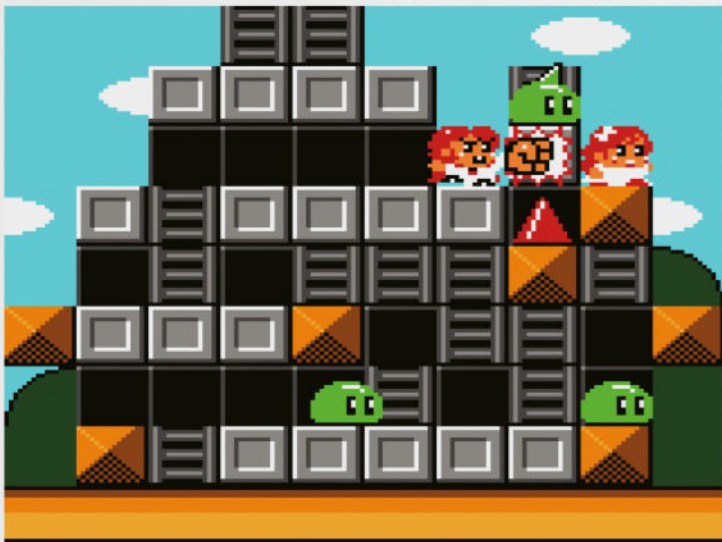
■ No doubt inspired by the success of *Tetris* on the Game Boy, Sega made this port of the popular arcade puzzler into a perennial Game Gear pack-in. It's a good version of the game, with the standard arcade gameplay and link cable functionality, as well as a Flash mode that challenges players to clear a specific piece at the bottom of the stack.



PENGO 1990

SEGA

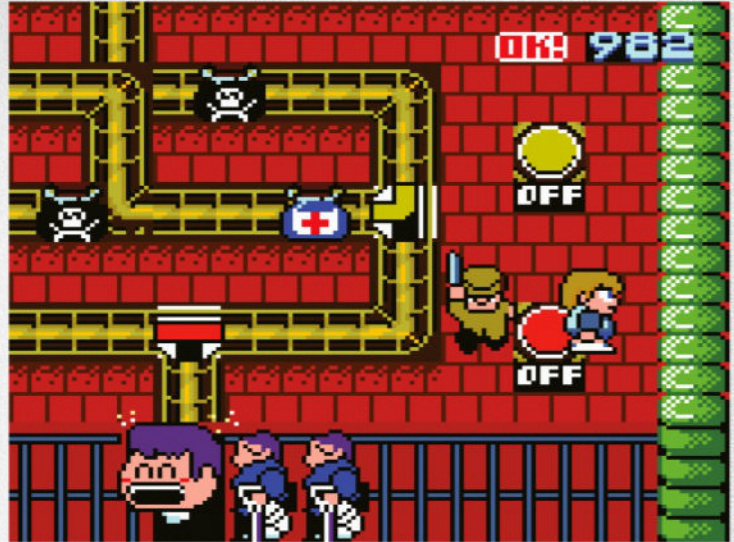
■ Although *Pengo* had been a moderate arcade success for Sega in the early Eighties, this was the first time the company converted the game to one of its own consoles. It's visually simple but plays faithfully to the original, and the short game sessions prove to be perfect for the handheld platform. If you enjoy this, the Japanese release *Ninku Gaiden: Hiroyuki Daikatsugeki* develops significantly on *Pengo*'s core gameplay.



POPILS: THE BLOCKBUSTING CHALLENGE 1991

TENGEN

■ *Bubble Bobble* designer Fukio Mitsuji designed this fantastic puzzle game, which is exclusive to the Game Gear. You must break blocks and navigate ladders, portals and more to rescue the princess across 100 stages, with a battery backup to save your place. If you get bored after beating them, the map editor allows you to design and save up to 30 of your own stages.



FACTORY PANIC 1991

JAPAN SYSTEM HOUSE

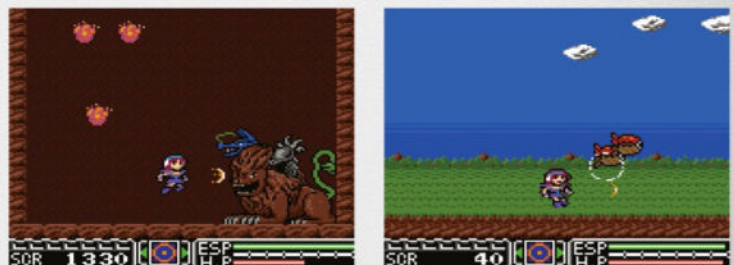
■ The people need goods, and your job in this action-puzzle game is to direct the right things to the right people by manipulating the directions of conveyor belts. You'll have to avoid the factory guards that constantly chase you, though. The Japanese version, *Ganbare Gorby*, stars Mikhail Gorbachev.



MAPPY 1991

NOVA

■ This Japan-only release is a pretty faithful conversion of the Eighties arcade classic, but that's not all it has to offer. A new mode features updated visuals and huge vertically scrolling levels, rather than the more horizontal ones of the arcade game, and a link cable mode is there for those who have the means to enjoy it. There's even a secret minigame to play, accessed via a button code.



PSYCHIC WORLD 1991

SANRITSU

■ This early platformer is a conversion of the 1988 MSX original by Hertz, and although the game also appeared on the Master System, the Game Gear version has been completely redesigned. You play as Lucia, who uses a variety of psychic powers to battle various creatures in an attempt to save her sister Cecile. It's not quite a top-tier platformer, but the varied powers allow you to have some fun and the game is often mentioned fondly by Game Gear fans. ▶



BERLIN WALL 1991

INTER STATE

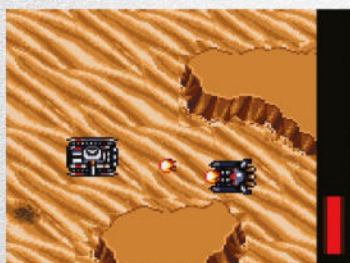
■ This is a conversion of a Kaneko arcade game, a single-screen platform game in which you use a hammer to knock out holes in the ground and trap enemies, similar to *Space Panic*. The Game Gear version ditches the digitised photo backgrounds of the coin-op but keeps the cutesy sprites, and adds secret item shops. A planned North American release for this game was sadly cancelled.



OUT RUN 1991

SEGA

■ Rather than recycling the Master System code, Sega produced a brand-new conversion of the classic arcade racing game tailored to the Game Gear. New additions include the option to choose automatic transmission, a mode in which you challenge a CPU rival, and a link cable mode that allows you to race against a friend. Thankfully, the classic music has been kept intact too.



GRIFFIN 1991

TELENET JAPAN

■ This entertaining Japanese exclusive shooting game is rather akin to vertically scrolling run-and-gun games like *Commando* and *Ikari Warriors*, except you're in control of a tank. It's not the longest game with only four stages to beat, but there is a harder second loop if you're up for the challenge.



FANTASY ZONE 1991

SANRITSU

■ Although it shares its name with the original arcade game, *Fantasy Zone* on the Game Gear is a brand-new game. You still take out bases in horizontally scrolling stages before taking on the big baddies, but the levels and bosses are all new.



SHINOBI 1991

SEGA R&D 2

■ This handheld exclusive entry in the popular ninja action series adopts a bit of a different structure to its predecessors. You get to choose the order in which you tackle the game's stages, rescuing other ninjas with their own unique abilities each time you complete one. Once you have all five, you'll be able to take on the final stage. This is a great game overall, and one of the Game Gear's very best.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 1991

ANCIENT

■ Though it shares many of the same assets, you may be surprised to know that Sonic's Game Gear debut isn't identical to its Master System counterpart, as stage layouts have been tweaked and boss battles redesigned to fit the smaller screen. There are even a few extra graphical flourishes here and there.



DEFENDERS OF OASIS 1992

SEGA CS2

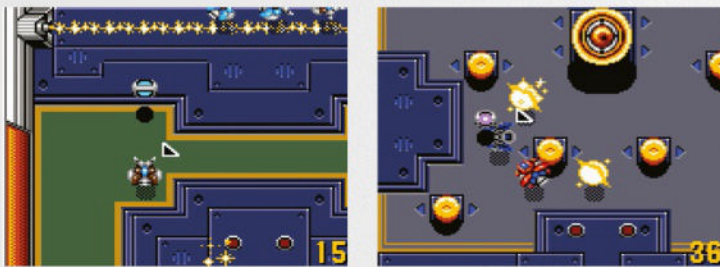
■ If you're looking for an RPG fix on the go, *Defenders Of Oasis* is the first Game Gear game we'd recommend. You play as the prince of a nation called Shanadar, where servants of the evil god Ahriman are plotting his return, centuries after being sealed away by the great hero Jamseed. The game doesn't do anything remarkable with the Japanese RPG formula, but it's made to a high quality and the interesting Middle Eastern setting makes it well worth playing.



SUPER OFF-ROAD 1992

GRAFTGOLD CREATIVE SOFTWARE

■ This arcade conversion turned out to be an ideal fit for the Game Gear. Because you get such a great view of the track, there's relatively little scrolling necessary – a boon given the motion blur on those old LCD displays, which hampered other top-down racers like the *Micro Machines* games. This one even supports the link cable, so you can race against a friend.



BUSTER BALL 1992

RIVERHILL SOFT

■ Here's a Japan-only futuristic sports game along the lines of *Speedball*, in which you must move a ball up the field and into a goal – the major problem being the necessity of passing, as the field is divided into sections with electrified barriers. It's fun, but reduce the time limit as the default is long.



WONDER BOY: THE DRAGON'S TRAP 1992

WESTONE

■ One of the very best Master System games is unsurprisingly brilliant on the Game Gear too. As always, you find yourself cursed to turn into a lizard and must fight your way through the Metroidvania-style world in order to gain new animal forms with their own abilities, so that you may become human again. This version has level design tweaks for the Game Gear's smaller screen plus some slight difficulty rebalancing, and it inexplicably never received a North American release.



THE COLLECTOR

WE SPEAK TO **DIEGO CHACON**, A COLLECTOR CLOSING IN ON A COMPLETE SET OF US GAME GEAR RELEASES

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO FOR A FULL SET OF GAME GEAR GAMES, DIEGO?

The reason I really like the Game Gear is partially just because it was the first console I ever played. My dad had one from when he was in college, so it was always the console that sat up on one of the top shelves and I'd have to ask him, "Hey, can I play this for a little bit?" So I played it back when I was about five or six. At some point it broke so we had to sell it, but later on, probably around 2022 or so, I finally got another one and that's where I started really going for the complete set of Game Gear games. I'm 12 games away right now.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE GAME GEAR GAMES?

I'm a little biased, but I really like *X-Men*. It was the first game I played as a kid. So, going back to it many years later, I was like, this is still pretty good. It's a little jank, but I can get around that. I would say *Sonic 1* is also really good, as well as *Triple Trouble* and *Chaos*. I'm not a big fan of *Sonic 2*. I think the level design is just not as good. One that I need to play more of because I really like it is *Dragon Crystal*, it is a mystery dungeon game and I love mystery dungeon games, and I didn't realise there was one on the Game Gear. *Defenders Of Oasis* is a very good, I would say – not generic, that's



the wrong word, but very run-of-the-mill RPG for the console. And there's not a lot of those, but this one's very good. And I liked a lot of the design and the theming around Arabic culture is actually really nice.

YOU ALSO HAVE A GOOD SELECTION OF PERIPHERALS THERE, DO ANY STAND OUT TO YOU?

I think having the Master System Player is very funny because it's like, you can take this console on the go, but it's also the home console. I think it's just because it makes the console extremely big. If you pair that with the Wide Gear, now you've got this really big console in front of you. I want to use the TV Tuner more, but I need to figure out a way to broadcast the right video signal.

DO YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULAR ADVICE FOR PLAYERS LOOKING TO GET INTO THE GAME GEAR?

I think it's almost required to just upgrade the screen, because the original Game Gear is such a battery hog. You get I think four hours off of six AA batteries, and nobody wants that. When you go ahead and do the screen upgrade, it goes from four hours to an insane 20 hours or something, the new screen is just that much more efficient. Also, whenever I buy a Game Gear, I expect it to be broken and I'll just replace the capacitors, even if it's not a problem at the time.



SHINOBI II: THE SILENT FURY 1992

SEGA CS2

■ The second Game Gear *Shinobi* game is similar in structure to the first, with non-linear progression and a multicoloured cast of ninjas to rescue, but it builds on the formula with both improved visuals and an even better soundtrack. Like its predecessor, *Shinobi II* wasn't ported to any contemporary platforms and it's another one of the Game Gear's very best games – arguably the best in the entire library.



ALIEN 3 1992

PROBE SOFTWARE

■ This film tie-in takes the same approach as the Mega Drive game – you run around maze-like stages, blasting the vicious aliens in their various forms while rescuing other survivors. The time limits are tight so stage memorisation is essential, but it's good fun and the parallax background effect is something the Game Gear shouldn't technically be capable of.



MASTER OF DARKNESS 1992

SIMS/SEGA CS

■ With no *Castlevania* of its own, the Game Gear is reliant on this Victorian-era horror story, in which Jack The Ripper and Dracula serve as the major baddies. The game design is very faithful to its inspiration, for better or worse – the awkward movement on the stairs and mid-air knock-back upon being hit are just as frustrating as ever. Having said that, there are far worse games to imitate and this is a damn good imitation.



LEMMINGS 1992

PROBE SOFTWARE

■ There's no need to introduce this classic puzzle game, but this version is worth highlighting. Getting the Amiga experience into the Game Gear was a real feat thanks to the console's less than ideal use of tilemap graphics, and the solution to job assignment is pretty clever too. The audio is masterful as well, with clear speech effects and excellent PSG music.



STREETS OF RAGE II 1993

JAPAN SYSTEM HOUSE/MNM SOFTWARE

■ You're not spoiled for great beat-'em-ups on the Game Gear, but this conversion of the Mega Drive classic is a worthy effort. Max has been dropped from the character roster, but the remaining characters gain new moves and the all-important multiplayer mode is retained. The classic soundtrack remains recognisable too, which is a nice bonus.



LAND OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE 1993

SEGA CS3

■ The 8-bit sequel to *Castle Of Illusion* is another Disney platforming classic, building on the gameplay of its predecessor with exciting new level design gimmicks while somehow improving the graphics. Mickey's quest this time involves returning a magic crystal to an unfamiliar village after an evil phantom steals it, replacing the village's happiness with sadness.



STAR WARS 1993

TIERTEX

■ This is a conversion of the NES game by Lucasfilm Games and Beam Software, and it's a solid platformer in which you play out the events of the original film, taking control of Princess Leia, Luke Skywalker or Han Solo as the plot requires. There are some neat additional sections in the Millennium Falcon and an X-Wing too.



ECCO THE DOLPHIN 1993

NOVOTRADE

■ Although it's a conversion of the Mega Drive game, there's very little like this on the Game Gear if you're looking for a unique experience. The game blends exploration, action and puzzle-solving as Ecco tries to rescue his pod from alien abductors. If you enjoy it, *Ecco: The Tides Of Time* also received a conversion to Sega's handheld hardware.



POWER STRIKE II 1993

COMPILE

■ This is a totally different game to the Master System game that shares its name, but like that game it was developed by the shoot-'em-up wizards at Compile. The Japanese title *GG Aleste II* gives away its heritage, and it lives up to it, packing the screen with destructive firepower and large bosses to defeat.



X-MEN 1994

SEGA OF AMERICA

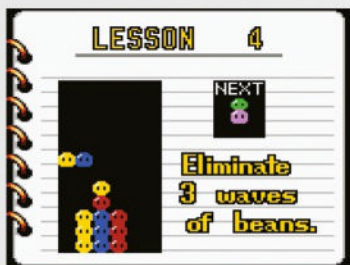
■ Magneto has captured most of the X-Men, and you've got to rescue them in this platformer. The game adopts a similar non-linear structure to the *Shinobi* games and likewise, you add members to your team upon completing levels. It's not quite as good, but this is one of the top examples of Sega's American output for the Game Gear.



ALADDIN 1994

SIMS

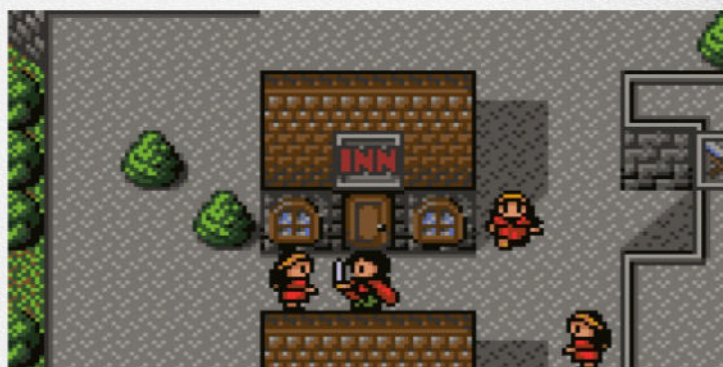
■ This movie licence is completely different to its 16-bit counterpart, but like that game it's one of the most attractive on the console. The gameplay here closely follows the events of the film, but with a far greater emphasis on evading enemies rather than engaging in combat. It's pretty easy, so it may be suitable for the younger players in your household.



DR ROBOTNIK'S MEAN BEAN MACHINE 1993

COMPILE/SEGA CS2

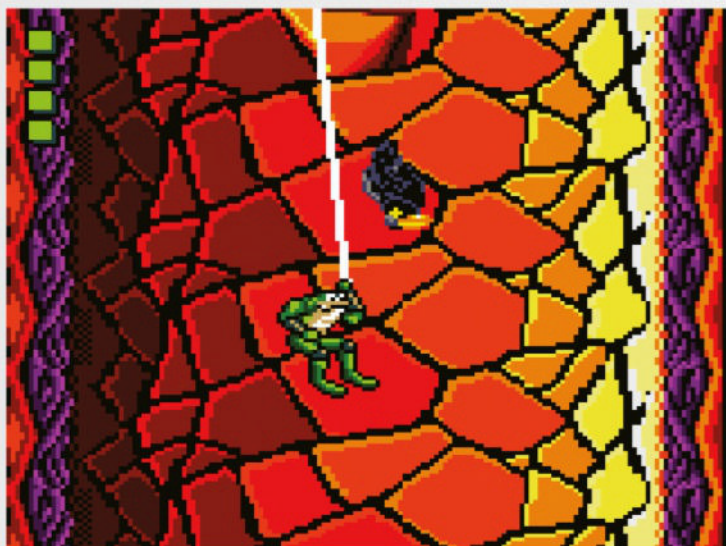
■ You all know the story – this is a localised version of the classic puzzle game *Puyo Puyo* with a *Sonic*-themed skin. As always, puzzle games and handheld consoles go together like beans and toast, and this version has a neat Puzzle mode in addition to the main game, which tasks you with meeting certain conditions.



MEGAMI TENSEI GAIDEN: LAST BIBLE 1994

SIMS

■ This RPG, converted from Atlus' Game Boy original, bears the usual *Megami Tensei* hallmarks such as being able to talk to the monsters in order to recruit them. However, it's aimed at a younger audience and isn't quite as dark. A fan translation is available.



BATTLETOADS 1993

ARC SYSTEM WORKS

■ This conversion of Rare's NES classic is one of the strongest beat-'em-ups on the portable platform. While it loses the co-op gameplay of other versions and keeps the high level of difficulty, it's a smooth brawler that keeps you on your toes with varied gameplay.



DROPZONE 1994

BIG RED SOFTWARE

■ This is a conversion of the late Archer Maclean's classic shoot-'em-up, and while the small screen can make things a bit tricky, it's a fast and frantic game that looks great and offers something different to the *Aleste* titles.





SONIC THE HEDGEHOG: TRIPLE TROUBLE 1994

ASPECT

■ The third of Aspect's 8-bit Sonic outings is the Game Gear's first exclusive Sonic platformer, and gives Knuckles his handheld debut, as well as introducing a new rival named Nack (or Fang, in Japan) who soon faded into obscurity. Much like its predecessor *Sonic Chaos*, it offers interesting items and vehicles like Rocket Boots, but it's a rather easy game.



FATAL FURY SPECIAL 1994

GAI BRAIN/ASPECT

■ The 8-bit consoles aren't renowned for great fighting games, but this conversion does a great job of capturing the spirit of SNK's original Neo Geo game. The stages look good and retain their time of day changes, the action is fast and responsive, and the nine-character roster is respectable.



SYLVAN TALE 1995

SEGA CS5

■ This action RPG never found release outside of Japan, but fortunately it has been given a fan translation so English-speaking players don't have to miss out. You play as Zetts, a hero on a quest to gather the six droplets that are key to saving Sylvant. It's more linear than you may expect, but it looks great and plays very well.



RISTAR 1995

JAPAN SYSTEM HOUSE

■ This platformer takes the Mega Drive game as a basis, with the same mechanic of grabbing enemies and more with Ristar's stretchy arms. However, it goes in its own direction in various ways — as well as a greater emphasis on collectables, the game has a number of totally exclusive stages with unique themes. It's a highly entertaining game and looks absolutely gorgeous.



NBA JAM: TOURNAMENT EDITION 1995

IGUANA ENTERTAINMENT

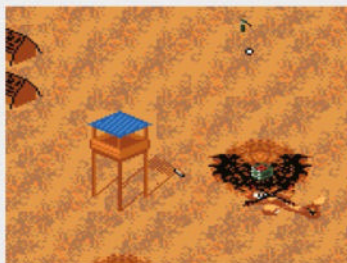
■ Sega's handheld manages to capture the speed and excitement of the arcade basketball hit, even without commentary lines like, "He's on fire!" Sadly there's no link cable support, but it's one of the system's top sports games for solo players.



GUNSTAR HEROES 1995

M2

■ The original tested the limits of the Mega Drive so you'd think this conversion would be a step too far, but it manages to retain the chaotic spirit of Treasure's classic. It loses a whole stage and definitely has some flicker and slowdown, but it does also have an exclusive bit where you commandeer a mech walker.



JUNGLE STRIKE 1995

UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT

■ The sequel to *Desert Strike* is known for its excellence on the Mega Drive, and the 8-bit conversion manages to do justice to the original game with great graphics and faithful gameplay. Unfortunately, THQ's planned European release failed to materialise despite great reviews, leaving this one as a US exclusive.



SHINING FORCE GAIDEN: FINAL CONFLICT 1995

SONIC SOFTWARE PLANNING

■ The Game Gear's first two *Shining Force* games received 16-bit upgrades in *Shining Force CD*, but this final game is a true exclusive and ties the plots of *Shining Force* and *Shining Force II* together. While it wasn't released outside of Japan, English-speaking players can enjoy this strategy RPG thanks to a fan translation.



KISHIN DOUJI ZENKI 1995

SEGA CS5

■ This anime tie-in is another strong Japan-only release from late in the Game Gear's life. Platform stages can be tackled as Zenki or his friend, the shrine maiden Chiaki, each of whom have their own unique abilities that are needed to progress, while Zenki takes on bosses solo. A fan translation is available.



TAILS ADVENTURES 1995

ASPECT

■ Sonic's best mate gets his own solo adventure, and it's a surprisingly good puzzle platformer that ditches speed for exploration. Tails gains various items throughout his journey, allowing him to find new paths in both the current stage and previously visited stages. Even non-fans of Sonic may enjoy it.



ARENA 1995

EDEN ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE

■ This isometric run-and-gun is exclusive to the Game Gear, and it's a bit of a hidden gem. You need to battle through warehouses and industrial districts, finding keys to make your way through a deadly maze populated by killer robots and troops. It's a tough game in which combat isn't always the answer, but it looks awesome and keeps you coming back.



PGA TOUR 96 1995

CERIS SOFTWARE

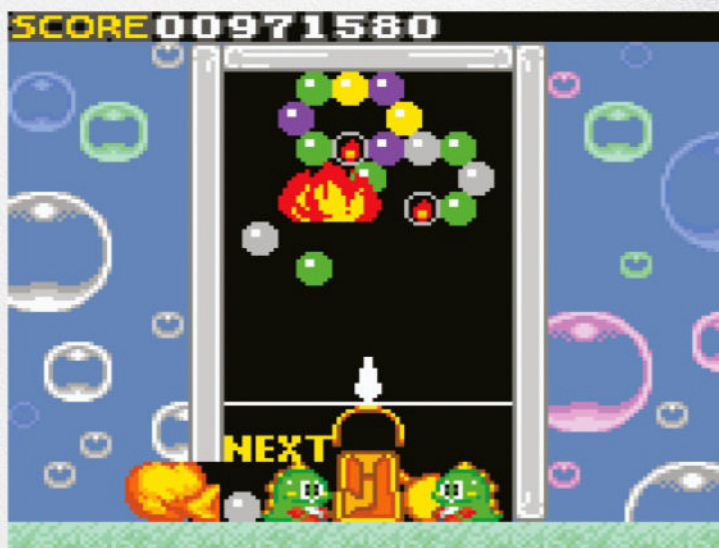
■ Slow-paced sports work well on the Game Gear's LCD and this is as slow as they get. However, it's as comprehensive a golf game as you could hope for and offers three full courses to tackle, with advice from eight PGA pros including the helpful Craig Stadler.



BAKU BAKU 1996

MINATO GIKEN

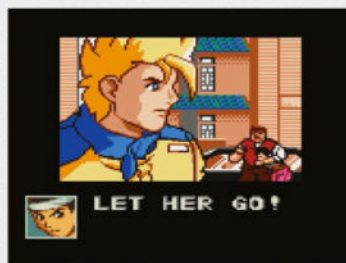
■ This falling block puzzler is a late release based on an arcade game, and has you matching various animals with their favourite foods. The presentation naturally isn't a patch on the Saturn version, but the gameplay is perfectly suited for the format.



BUST-A-MOVE 1996

SANTOS

■ This was the very last third-party Game Gear release in Japan, under the original *Puzzle Bobble* name, and it's a great conversion of Taito's *Bubble Bobble* spin-off puzzler. This version includes features that were added to the SNES version, most notably the special bubbles such as a Flame Bubble that burns up nearby bubbles when hit.



VIRTUA FIGHTER ANIMATION 1996

ASPECT

■ With no hope of replicating the 3D visuals the series is famous for, this game tries something different by emphasising plot. Following the story of the *Virtua Fighter* anime series, you fight against the martial arts-based crime gang Koenkan – only Akira Yuki is initially available to select, but beaten fighters join your team along the way.



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:**
KWALEE
- » **DEVELOPER:**
FALLEN TREE GAMES
- » **RELEASE:**
MAY 13 2025
- » **PLATFORM:**
PC, XBOX SERIES X/S,
PLAYSTATION 5
- » **GENRE:**
ACTION/ADVENTURE

RETRO VIBES ABOUND AS YOU PLAY A COP TAKING DOWN GANGS IN THE FICTIONAL AVERNO CITY – FROM THE ISOMETRIC VIEWPOINT, TO FAMILIAR TRIBUTES TO AND ATTITUDES FROM SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES COP SHOWS. BUT MODERN TECHNOLOGY ADDS FRESHNESS, AND PLAYING A BEAT COP IS ODDLY COMPELLING

WORDS BY STEVE BOXER

From the moment you first clap eyes on it, *The Precinct* makes clear its desire to pay homage to the games and culture of yesteryear. Most noticeably thanks to its high-camera, near-isometric viewpoint. Then you look more closely at the streets of its setting, the fictional (but New York-inspired) Averno City, and realise they are neon-lit, shabby, steam-ridden and full of dodgy characters, instantly bringing to mind reminiscences of beloved cop shows of yore like *Kojak* and *Hill Street Blues*.

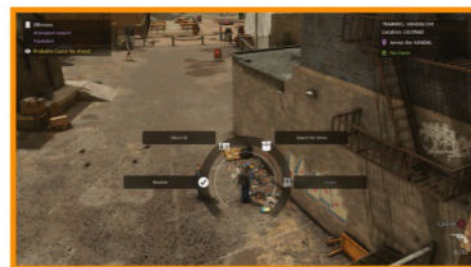
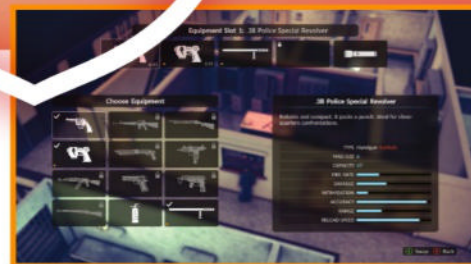
But while *The Precinct* makes its retro sensibilities clear, it also clearly avails itself of modern technology – eschewing the pixel-art route, for example, in favour of full 3D, so it's no exercise in retro slavishness.

We spoke to Lewis Boadle, art director of *The Precinct*'s developer Fallen Tree Games, who sheds some light on the game's conception. "In 2019 we released a game called *American Fugitive*, where you're on the run from the cops. We started *The Precinct*

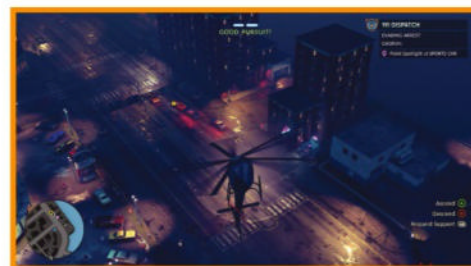
straight after that, having discussed what it would be like to be the cops, rather than the guy running away from them. Being a small team, we don't have the resources to do a first or a third-person camera, when you're seeing everything close-up. So with *American Fugitive*, we said, 'OK, let's just put the camera up in the air, some 30 or 40 metres,' then you don't need the level of detail that people might expect, and we can put in some exciting gameplay with breakables, car chases and so on. But also, we've found that it has tapped into this retro market. It wasn't intentional to begin with: it was born out of necessity."

It's surprising, among the welter of heist games, how few games there are these days in which you play a cop. In *The Precinct*, you're cast as Nick Cordell Jr, a rookie just out of the academy, and initially paired up with Sergeant Kelly, a hard-bitten old-timer.

Sent out onto Averno City's mean streets in a squad car and on foot, you learn the ropes via fairly mundane grunt-work. You soon glean that there are six kinds of parking offences you



» [Xbox Series X] Making an arrest: make sure you follow the right procedure.



» [Xbox Series X] Police tech isn't advanced in *The Precinct*'s time, but it does include helicopters.



» [Xbox Series X] Cop cars always provide handy cover during a shoot-out.



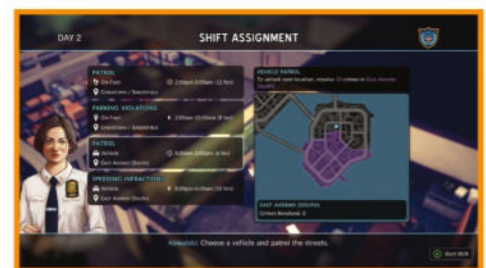
» [Xbox Series X] Eugene the evidence guy is your key ally as you bid to shut down Averno City's gangs.

ANCIENT COP SHOW INSPIRATION

Mashing up classic cop shows and movies

■ Lewis Boadle namechecks early top-down *Grand Theft Auto* games and *Chinatown Wars* as obvious general inspirations, but goes deeper into *Fallen Tree Games'* small and silver-screen inspirations for *The Precinct*. "We decided that Seventies, Eighties and Nineties movies and TV shows were the natural jumping-off point: all those tropes and visuals from movies like *French Connection*, *LA Confidential*, *Heat* and other TV shows like *Cagney & Lacey* (pictured) and *Kojak*. By saying that this is a game about what it's like to be a cop in a movie or a TV show, we can just have fun with it; we can go a bit larger than life.

"Any excuse to get the fun in – and our love, our passion for those old games and those old movies: hopefully that shines through. I've just been watching nothing but those old shows for the past five years, including every episode of *Hill Street Blues*: I love them."



» [Xbox Series X] As you hit your crime-quotas on patrol, you open up new areas of the city.

can issue tickets for, and are quickly introduced to the squad's favourite food truck and encouraged to breakfast on a hot dog, referred to as a 'tube steak'.

Structure-wise, *The Precinct* is divided into working days: you might spend one walking the beat chasing and catching criminals who have committed petty crimes – when you do catch them, you have to charge them for the appropriate crimes and get your arrest procedure right. Before long, you're engaging in car chases, and in your first working week, you get to pilot a helicopter (with pleasingly simple controls) to assist officers on the ground by shining a spotlight on a wanted criminal's car – keep it spotlit long enough, and you can call in spike strips and more pursuit cars.



» Art director Lewis Boadle: connoisseur of vintage cop shows.

Ferrara, and given a crash course in Averno City's gangs. You must work your way up their hierarchical structure, arresting and convicting low-level operatives before uncovering the info required to take on the bosses. The structure feels logical, and offers an interesting mix of mundane police work (some of which proves way more compelling than you might imagine) and action.

Lewis provides more details on *The Precinct* as a complete entity, "We're looking at about six to ten hours of the campaign plus side-content for the average player. The story is about 50 percent of the gameplay, and the other half is procedural open-world gaming. So when you finish the story, you can just get back out on your shift and carry on doing police work. You'll always be a uniform cop: you'll never progress to detective."

While *The Precinct* draws inspiration from Seventies and Eighties cop shows, Lewis admits that *Fallen Tree Games* had to take into account some modern sensibilities, "Chinatown is one of the more memorable areas, but most parts of the city aren't racially segregated. That was something we were quite careful with. Our gangs, for example, are more racially diversified. There is a Chinese-influenced gang, for example, but their membership is diverse."

Further confirmation that while *The Precinct* has an undeniably retro feel to it, it skillfully avoids the trap of being retro for the sake of it. If the idea of an action-packed cop-procedural dripping in hard-bitten Seventies and Eighties vibes sounds appealing, check it out. ★

Every working day in the Averno City Police Department brings something new – getting to know different areas of the city, as well as your colleagues, including Organised Crime Department detectives Li and Ferrara, and Eugene, the evidence guy. The tutorial-style early stage of the game concludes with a big setpiece shoot-out as, in the company of a SWAT team, you take down a gang kingpin, Matthew Kosta, in an abandoned steel mill. That showcases *The Precinct's* third-person shooting system, which features loads of snap – both to targets and behind cover – and forces you to seek (plentiful) ammo crates.

After taking down Kosta, the game begins properly. You're reassigned to assist Li and

PIXELS & MAGIC

THE RISE OF DISNEY GAMES THROUGH THE EIGHTIES AND NINETIES

IN THE EIGHTIES, DISNEY GAMES WERE ALL ABOUT SMALL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AIMED AT CHILDREN. TEN YEARS LATER, GAMERS OF ALL AGES WERE IN AWE OF DISNEY GAMES' STATE-OF-THE-ART SOUND, GRAPHICS AND GAMEPLAY. SO HOW DID DISNEY PROGRESS FROM SMALL PRODUCTIONS TO AAA GAMES?

WORDS BY DAMIANO GERLI



DAVID MULLICH

David joined The Walt Disney Company as its first software producer in 1987, creating several titles based upon Disney films, tv shows and characters. Later, he also produced games such as *Darkseed 2* and *Heroes Of Might & Magic*. Today he works as a consultant for aspiring game developers.



Today, it would be easy to think that Disney videogames have been around since the dawn of home computers. Can one even imagine a time without games starring Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck? But even a huge, universally recognised company like Walt Disney had to start from scratch when it came time to approaching the world of gaming.

Its first titles were a series of simple educational games aimed at kids, developed by Sierra On-Line for home computers. While Sierra CEO Ken Williams does not recall these first experiences with Disney as particularly pleasant in his book about his years at Sierra, he was again approached for a game for the 1985 movie *The Black Cauldron*. He convinced his wife Roberta Williams to work on it, since this way they could also speed up the development of AGI, the new adventure designer that was going to be used for *King's Quest*.

The first ideas by Sierra were almost all rejected by Disney, as the company did not

like to include "things that didn't happen in the movie," such as the character dying. The executives seemed not to understand the difference between a film and a videogame. Roberta Williams mentions threatening to leave the project until her husband stepped in. In the end, Disney was convinced and let Sierra do its thing. Ken Williams concludes in his book that the movie bombed, but the game was a huge success for them.

"ONE OF THE QUESTIONS I GOT AT THE DISNEY JOB INTERVIEW WAS IF I COULD NAME ALL SEVEN DWARVES. AND I DID!"

DAVID MULLICH

Since Disney wanted to continue working with third-party developers, it needed more experience in the gaming sphere. "Disney was looking for a software development specialist," recalls David Mullich. "I had been a longtime fan, ever since *Mary Poppins*. I remember one of the interview questions, from the vice president, was actually if I could name all seven dwarves. I did!"

David was the first to join the company with videogame experience, as he mentions that everyone else at Disney came from an educational background. It seemed Disney was



PATRICK GILMORE

Patrick began his gaming career in 1989 at the Walt Disney Company, where he built the first internal game teams, working on such original projects as *Maui Mallard In Cold Shadow* and *Gargoyles*. Today, Patrick is vice president of studios for Foundation 9 Entertainment.



STEPHAN L. BUTLER

■ Stephan started as an assistant product manager for Kyodai, a Broderbund startup company, in Japan. After producing *Pipe Dream* for Lucasfilm, he worked at Disney producing games such as *Castle Of Illusion*, *Fantasia*, *The Little Mermaid*. Stephan today works as a writer.



WILLIAM ANDERSON

■ William grew up on Atari 800 computers, designing RPGs and moved to Virgin to become a level designer, working on games such as *Cool Spot* and *The Jungle Book*. Later he would also work for Capcom. Today he's an independent game development consultant.

learning from past troubles, as David recalls being at GDC and meeting "Someone who had worked with Disney on a cancelled *Dumbo* game, he told me he argued with them non-stop because the colour of the elephant wasn't right. Of course it wasn't his fault, those were the only colours he could work with!"



David's first experience was working with Hi-Tech Expressions studio on Disney ride games, such as *The Chase On Tom Sawyer's Island*.

"My job was to ensure that the artwork was up to Disney standards and that it was playable and fun, along with checking the packaging and marketing materials and keeping the company happy."

But with Disney movies gaining traction, David would move on to bigger licences such as *Roger Rabbit* and *Dick Tracy*. "We got to tour the set and I met Warren Beatty, all dressed up in his classic Tracy outfit, yellow trenchcoat and hat." Interestingly, Beatty had final approval on all of the *Dick Tracy* games, so they were all sent to his house before publishing. "I'm not sure if he ever played them, the assistant I was in contact with just quickly approved them all," mentions David.

Disney was going all out on *Dick Tracy*, releasing all kinds of games for every gaming platform in the early Nineties. "At one point, I

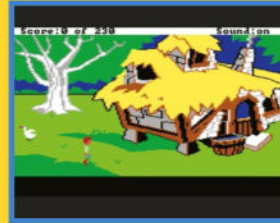
HITS OF THE EIGHTIES

MEET DISNEY'S DIGITISED MONEYMAKERS



DUCKTALES

■ One of the most successful outings of the Eighties came right at the end of the decade, with this unforgettable Capcom 2D platformer. With great music, precise gameplay and Scrooge disposing of enemies with his stick, this trip in Duckburg was the best.



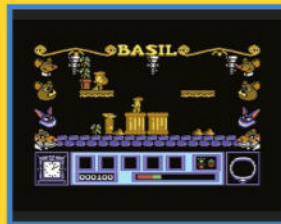
THE BLACK CAULDRON

■ Because of several controversies and discussions, this was Sierra's final Disney game. However, this adventure was also a way for the company to hurry the development of *King's Quest*. It was designed by Al Lowe and Roberta Williams.



TRON: DEADLY DISCS

■ One of several games released to promote *Tron*, this was a simple but entertaining arcade game. While the Atari version is more celebrated, the Mattel Intellivision version let the player flick the disc in many different directions via the keypad.



BASIL THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE

■ One of the lesser Eighties Disney classics, this was a pretty solid adventure on home computers, instead of the usual platformer. Control Basil and travel around London to collect clues while steering clear of Rattigan's many goons.



MICKEY MOUSECAPADE

■ Among the first Disney games on NES and the only one developed by Hudson Soft, this simple platformer has Mickey and Minnie running around trying to defeat mice and getting to the Disney boss at the end. It's short but very sweet.



WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT

■ Often recognised as one of the worst Disney games on the NES, the game still sold relatively well because of its license. Developed by Rare, it was an action-adventure that followed the movie well, but delivered lackluster gameplay and obscure puzzles.

was working on [versions of] fifteen different games, which we called skus," he says. David also produced the NES version of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, which was developed by Rare. The producer recalls a curious problem with the publisher, LJN, as it insisted that it wanted to feature a hint line in the game. The player would receive a phone number from Jessica Rabbit, and they could call her up to receive hints from her actual voice. "Our internal department told me the original voice actress for Jessica, Kathleen Turner, was too expensive. So they used a soundalike, that I believe did a pretty good job. But LJN wasn't happy." Indeed, it insisted angrily that the actress sounded nothing like Turner. "I don't know what happened next, as they decided to take it to the higher-ups, but the biggest trouble I remember from my years as a producer wasn't with Disney, but with the licensee!"



» [PC] The producer recalls that a plane level was included because of Launchpad McQuack.



A remarkably aggressive and extremely poisonous spider is discovered in a remote South American rain forest.

» [PC] *Arachnophobia* was a PC exclusive, apparently Disney did not fund any console releases.



» [SNES] *Goof Troop* was one of several Capcom games. It was co-designed by *Resident Evil*'s Shinji Mikami.

HITS OF THE NINETIES

THE CONSOLE CLASSICS YOU NEED TO PLAY



CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE

■ The one that started the whole Disney 16-bit platformer craze of the Nineties. Sega Of Japan produced a pristine platformer with great-looking graphics and entertaining gameplay. The 8-bit version is also great with a few different levels thrown in.



WORLD OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE AND DONALD DUCK

■ The sequel to *Castle Of Illusion* saw the dev team back again for one last game. This time Donald Duck also joins the fray. Great in co-op, in single-player mode each character follows their own path with some unique levels.



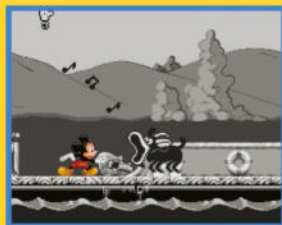
ALADDIN

■ Virgin Games delivered one of the best tie-in platformers ever made. With the movie being a blockbuster hit, *Aladdin* followed suit with levels inspired by the movie's scenes, a perfect soundtrack, and beautiful artwork. Capcom released a great SNES alternative, too.



THE LION KING

■ Westwood would rise up to the challenge of delivering a 2D platformer based on the movie. While it might be, arguably, slightly less successful than *Aladdin* in doing so, it still features some of the best 16-bit art and animation on the market.



MICKEY MANIA

■ Traveller's Tales delivered a trip through history as Mickey Mouse goes back and revisits many of his classic shorts, from *Steamboat Willie* onwards. While gameplay is a tad less balanced than other platformers, it still more than satisfied players.



STUNT ISLAND

■ A unique specimen in Disney games, it allowed players to create their own stunts by flying more than 50 different aircrafts (including a duck!), plus over 1,000 props. Producer Stephan Butler recalls it took many years to complete it.

► But *Roger Rabbit* games had other issues too, as David recalls the release of the 1988 computer game, one of the first big projects published by Disney, produced by Sam Palahnuik. "It came out at Christmas, and we only had one customer support line. I thought it'd be a good idea to stay over, as customers would start calling, and indeed, they did. Hundreds of calls in a few hours. The game had a long intro that you could not skip and people were not happy. I spent my time off answering phone calls." Interestingly, there were even plans for an Apple II version of *Dick Tracy*, but it was scrapped, with David telling us, "The marketing department told us there was no market anymore. Shame, cause I thought it was great, much better than the NES version! It even featured digitised speech, without any additional hardware."

David also worked on designing games such as *DuckTales Quest For Gold*. "We were approached by Cinemaware, as they wanted to do a PC *DuckTales* game. We went to visit them. Their artwork was state-of-the-art, which I thought was what Disney should have, while their minigame idea was quite basic. After the meeting, the business people told me, 'You know we could make much more money if we made the PC games ourselves. We no longer need to go out and license them.' They agreed that a minigame-based *DuckTales* game would work, so we are going to do that. Thank you for the suggestion, Cinemaware!" he laughs.

In the game, Scrooge competes against Flintheart to see who will earn the most money in several adventures. "I designed several minigames, such as the stock market one, based on a board game I designed as a teenager to play with my family. I also wrote the Junior Woodchuck manual for the game. I had a pretty close association with the Boy Scouts Of America, so that came pretty naturally."

By the early Nineties, Disney was more interested in the console market, while PC games were going to be done in-house and on a smaller budget. David also felt more attention was being put on games using the



» [Mega Drive] There are many Easter eggs in *Aladdin*, like this Goofy motif on the column.

Disney Sound Source soundcard. "I guess it was so they could also sell a hardware unit along with the software."

A peculiar experience that David recalls is *Arachnophobia*, a PC game for the oft-forgotten horror Disney/Beuna Vista Pictures movie starring John Goodman, Jeff Daniels and many six-legged creatures. "We visited the set with the dev team, Bluesky Software, and met the spider wrangler. He set up a small pen, and a few tarantulas were crawling around that we filmed to animate for the game."

Indeed, the Nineties would signal the start of Disney's rise to power, which came through collaborations with some of the best Japanese and Western developers, such as Capcom with *DuckTales*. Producers kept up with the Japanese developers via fax or FedEx packages. "I would play alpha or beta versions of the games to check if they were in line with what the company was expecting," recalls David. "Capcom even sent me a huge print-out of all the levels in *DuckTales*! They came up with the ideas for that project. I remember thinking it was funny that Scrooge McDuck's cane would work as a pogo stick, since that never happened in the TV show... but you have to adapt the passive TV experience to an active one."



» [Mega Drive] Mickey giving Aladdin a run for his money with this magic carpet ride. A brave new world?



» [PC] Guide Huey Dewey and Louie in the jungle to grab some diamonds for Uncle Scrooge.



» [Amstrad CPC] *Mickey Mouse* was an early home-computer release from Gremlin Graphics, which appeared on various systems.

But the relationship between Disney and Capcom seemed to come to a head a few years down the line, as programmer William Anderson remembers. "We were working on the *Aladdin* game, which we completed in less than four months. As soon as Virgin got that licence, it was all hands on deck, everyone was on board on the project, with David Perry being a huge influence on the design." But, unbeknownst to Virgin, Disney HAD been working with Capcom on a Super Nintendo version. "They brought our game to Capcom and forced them to scrap what they did and start all over from scratch. It was quite the letter of confidence for our team!" Indeed, *Aladdin* would be among the final Disney games that Capcom would work on for a while, although it would work on a number of new Disney IPs during the late-Nineties and early Noughties.

One of the biggest Nineties hits for Disney was *Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse*, with the Mickey Mouse licence given to Sega Of America and development to Sega Of Japan. Disney wanted the game to be non-violent and, also, Mickey could not die (hence lives

"THE GAME BROUGHT IN MILLIONS AND I GOT A PAT ON THE BACK. IT WAS LIKE WE WON THE SUPER BOWL, BUT I DIDN'T GET A RING"

STEPHAN BUTLER



» [Mega Drive] *Dick Tracy* was released on various systems. The presentation of the Mega Drive game is superb.



» [NES] *DuckTales* was a huge success for Capcom and remastered in 2013.



» [SNES] *The Jungle Book* was another solid platformer with genuinely spectacular animation.



» [SNES] While Virgin Games was working on *Aladdin* for Sega systems, Capcom was doing the same for Nintendo systems.



» [SNES] Not every Disney game was a success. *Beauty And The Beast* was problematic according to Patrick.



» [SNES] Simba finds himself facing off against a hyena in Westwood Studio's adaptation of *The Lion King*.



» [SNES] As you progress through the Steamboy Willy level, more colour is introduced.

are called "tries"). "The Japanese development team exceeded every experience I've had with developers," producer Stephan L Butler tells us. "The engine they had was incredible, gaming-wise, it was the start of the muscle-car era. We wanted the game to be popular, but nobody knows which game is going to be a hit. We had the right mix of property, publisher, and developer."

Simon also recalls contributing a small bit of the standing animation of Mickey Mouse, as Mickey would impatiently tap his foot if the player did not move the character for a few seconds. Incidentally, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, released a few months after *Castle Of Illusion*, shared a similar animation to the iconic mouse.

In 1991, Sega released another *Mickey Mouse* game, *Fantasia*, developed by Infogrames. While announced with great fanfare, it proved to be a critical and commercial flop (see issue 258 for *The Making Of*). "There were also licensing issues so, in the end, it was pulled

"I LOVED CONSOLE GAMES, SO I VOLUNTEERED TO TAKE ALL LICENSED PRODUCTS. I ENDED UP WORKING ON SOMETHING LIKE 25 GAMES IN JUST A COUPLE OF YEARS"

PATRICK GILMORE

from shelves." Stephan also mentions that console games had a much higher budget, with computer games being "about five times smaller, but even that depended on the game and its audience". Despite the success of *Castle Of Illusion*, Stephen says the producers didn't see much from it. "I was given a \$3,000 raise. The game

brought in millions, and I got a pat on the back. I was told Disney had corporate limits on raises and such. It was like we won the Super Bowl, but I didn't get a ring."

The sequel, *World Of Illusion*, was produced by Patrick Gilmore, who recalls the game being slower than he would have liked. "Sega Of Japan really wanted a 'date game' as it was very popular in those days (in Japan) for players to play games as part of getting to know each other. Sega felt like the slow pace was needed to include less experienced players and allow for social exchanges during gameplay. I liked the 8-bit *Land Of Illusion* better."

Patrick came on board in the early Nineties, after working at ABC. He mentions that "Managing licensed products was kind of



» [Master System] *Legend Of Illusion*, the final Nineties *Illusion* title, keeps many of the traditional gameplay elements.



» [Master System] The cutscenes in *Legend Of Illusion* still look quite beautiful with their comic-book style.



» [Mega Drive] It's the second world of *Castle Of Illusion* and Mickey finds himself having a Lionel Richie moment.



» [Mega Drive] *Castle Of Illusion* was a huge hit for Sega. It was remade in 2013 by Sega Studios Australia.

looked down on. Most producers took them on as a kind of penance for the PC games they really wanted to make. It was the era of Nintendo, and the upcoming release of Sega Genesis. I loved console games, so I volunteered to take all the licensed products. I ended up working on something like 25 games in just a couple of years."

Patrick also worked on *Mickey Mania*, which he recalls as one of the best Disney Nineties platformers. "Traveller's Tales was phenomenal to work with," he says. "Every time they sent in a build, people came running. Some of the effects they pulled off were just a marvel. They also really understood Mickey, and wanted to make a game that honoured the tradition of all of Mickey's short films."

After the success of *Aladdin* and *Castle Of Illusion*, Disney seemed to want games made for every property it had. Some of these would not make for great games, such as *Pinocchio* or *Beauty And The Beast*, especially the latter, which Patrick mentions as being one of the most challenging games he worked on. "While the characters are amazing, their arcs and the setting don't necessarily lend themselves to the simple conflicts that usually drive a game. *Beauty And The Beast* is a romance, mostly confined in the castle, and I think we felt those limitations pretty keenly."

Many of the producers would leave the company before the Nineties were over, with David mentioning management as the biggest obstacle. "All new game ideas had to be approved by six managers, and it's a lot easier to say no than yes. I pitched a *Haunted Mansion* game, and an *It's A Small World* game... all of them rejected. After six months of trying, I had no games approved, so I left."

While Disney tie-in games would become less relevant after the Nineties, as the company branched out with different experiences such as *Kingdom Hearts*, they remain some of the best games ever released during that era. All thanks to the work of experienced developers and producers. ★

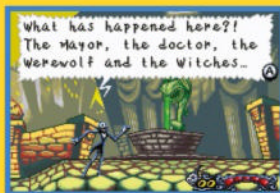
MODERN Disney HITS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE NOUGHTIES ONWARDS



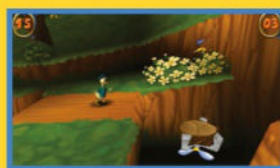
KINGDOM HEARTS

■ No one thought a crossover between Disney and *Final Fantasy* could work, but Square Enix proved the world wrong. The original 2002 title kickstarted a hugely successful RPG series still going strong that has, to this day, sold 36 million copies. The easiest way to play it today is via *Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 Remix*.



TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS: THE PUMPKIN KING

■ Written as a prequel to the movie, the game was a 2D open-world action adventure where Jack Skellington is out to save Halloween Town. Great graphics and satisfying gameplay. By the developer of *Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime*.



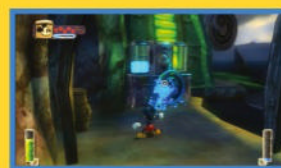
DONALD DUCK: GOIN' QUACKERS

■ Donald stars in this 3D platformer that plays something between a *Super Mario* game and *Crash Bandicoot*. Alternating between 2D side-scrolling action and 3D running and jumping, this was one of the last true Disney platformers, albeit developed by Ubi Soft. It made its way to various systems.



LEGO PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

■ Traveller's Tales goes back to the Disney brand after years, delivering a pristine Lego experience with elements from all of the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* movies. Action, small puzzles and humour ensue, and there's lots of studs to collect as well. The studio would later work on other Disney-owned IP such as *Lego The Incredibles*.



EPIC MICKEY

■ Designed by Warren Spector to be a true return to form for Disney Games and an exclusive Wii title, the platformer never really lived up to its reputation and pedigree. It was popular enough to spawn two sequels and has recently been released for new systems thanks to a brand-new HD update.



TRON 2.0

■ Written as the first sequel to the cult 1982 movie (today, sadly, it's now treated as a non-canon entry), *TRON 2.0* remains a still beautiful-looking FPS by Monolith Productions (RIP). With an emphasis on vertical jumping and plenty of racing in Light Cycles, this is a unique experience and remains one of the best *TRON* games that you can play.

Cerebus





Breath Of Fire III

SLAY THE DRAGON? NO, BE THE DRAGON

» RETROREVIEWAL



» PLAYSTATION » 1997 » CAPCOM

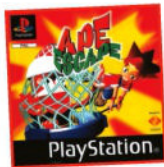
After battling my way through *Final Fantasy VII* as a teenager, I found myself hankering for a new RPG.

But what the heck was I supposed to play that could adequately follow the game that was definitely the most lavish of its type, and broadly considered the best? As with many of life's grand questions, the answer was found on the shelves of my local video rental shop. I knew that *Breath Of Fire III* wouldn't offer the same production values as Square's all-time classic, but I recalled it receiving good reviews, and any game promising dragon gene splicing has to be at least worth a look – especially as it was being sold off for £5.

It turned out that the game was about as far as you could get from the big budget blockbuster feeling of *Final Fantasy VII*. Even though I wasn't familiar with the previous *Breath Of Fire* games on the SNES, the third game felt very much like a 16-bit game that had somehow found its home on the PlayStation. That's no bad thing, mind. Really, the 3D environments and occasional battle effects feel like the only concession to modernity – the sprite work is cute and the towns have a real charm to them, especially with the jaunty music playing in the background.

Beyond the cosy presentation, the game did plenty to satisfy my RPG craving. Following Ryu's journey from being taken in by young bandits to eventually realising his dragon form is interesting, and playing around with the various dragon forms in battle was a lot of fun. I was surprised by just how much I got into the fishing minigame, too. So while it's nice to have fancy FMV, pre-rendered backgrounds and 3D battle scenes, a great adventure is great regardless of any of that – and *Breath Of Fire III* is one of the finest adventures available on the PlayStation. ★

THE MAKING OF APE ESCAPE



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:**
SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
- » **DEVELOPER:**
SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PLATFORM:**
PLAYSTATION
- » **RELEASED:**
1999
- » **GENRE:**
ACTION

SHUHEI YOSHIDA AND KENJI KAIDO SHED LIGHT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF APE ESCAPE, THE FIRST PLAYSTATION GAME TO MAKE FULL USE OF THE DUALSHOCK'S ANALOGUE CONTROLS. THIS INFLUENTIAL 1999 GAME WOULD SPAWN NUMEROUS SEQUELS, SPIN-OFFS AND CAMEOS, MOST RECENTLY REAPPEARING IN SONY'S 2024 HIT ASTRO BOT

WORDS BY LEWIS PACKWOOD

Ape Escape was a landmark title in the history of the PlayStation, being the first game that was only playable with a DualShock controller (which launched in 1997, around three years after the PlayStation's debut). Before Ape Escape's release in June 1999, several PlayStation games had added support for the DualShock's analogue controls in addition to the standard d-pad, but Ape Escape was the first title to be entirely built around the DualShock, packed with weapons, gadgets and vehicles that required full use of the two sticks, along with the newfangled L3 and R3 buttons.

Yet interestingly, right back at the start of development, there was no plan to use analogue controls. Shuhei Yoshida, who worked as an executive producer on Ape Escape, recalls that the team, "Wanted to create a 3D, open-field, sandbox game like Mario 64, and they came up with the idea of capturing monkeys. So that came first. But

during development, we learned from the hardware team that they were working on a new controller with two analogue sticks." That discovery inspired them to create gameplay that was only possible with the DualShock.

Yoshida had started working at Sony straight out of college in 1986, initially in the Corporate Strategy Group in Sony's headquarters. But as a huge videogame fan, he ended up joining Ken Kutaragi's PlayStation team in 1993. "They were already developing the actual PlayStation hardware, but they had a ritual that any new person joining the team was able to play the Nintendo version of PlayStation. Kutaragi's team [had been] developing the all-in-one system with the Super NES and the CD-ROM as one unit, and there were a couple of games already near completion," explains Yoshida. One of the games was an unreleased shooter that was similar in concept to Game Arts' *Silpheed*, using 2D sprites over a 3D background that was streamed from the CD. Yoshida was the lead account manager for



■ Shuhei Yoshida was executive producer on *Ape Escape* and later went on to become the president of SCE Worldwide Studios. He left Sony in January 2025 and now acts as an independent consultant for companies including Kepler Interactive.



■ Kenji Kaido worked at Taito before moving to Sony Computer Entertainment. He joined the *Ape Escape* team as associate producer before becoming lead designer. He would later work on *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus*.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE LEGEND OF DRAGOON

PLATFORM:
PLAYSTATION

RELEASED: 1999

FANTAVISION

PLATFORM:
PLAYSTATION 2

RELEASED: 2000

GENJI (PICTURED)

PLATFORM:
PLAYSTATION 2

RELEASED: 2005



» [PlayStation] Monkeys drop banana skins behind them when you give chase, which cause you to slip up. The bananas were originally poop in early development.



» [PlayStation] *Ape Escape's* unusual control scheme uses R1 for jump, while the face buttons select different gadgets that are used via the right analogue stick.

Japanese publishers and developers making games for PlayStation, but in early 1996 he became a producer for Naughty Dog's *Crash Bandicoot*, since the production team at Sony Computer Entertainment Inc needed someone who could handle English communication. "And because just handling one game wouldn't make me busy enough, I was given an assignment to grow the internal Japan Studio," Yoshida says.

"At that time, there was only one full team, making *Motor Toon Grand Prix* games." That group would go on to create *Gran Turismo* and would later be spun out as Polyphony Digital.

A tiny team of three people was working on a prototype of what would

become *Ape Escape* when Yoshida joined. The team's leader, Susumu Takatsuka, had moved across from Sega's AM2 division. "He was the animator of a fighting game called *Fighting Vipers*," Yoshida recalls. The other two were fresh out of college: Yuji Yamada would go on to become the game's lead programmer, while Takamitsu Iijima became a character designer.

Yoshida and Takatsuka then hired Kenji Kaido from Taito, an experienced designer who had worked on games like *Warrior Blade: Rastan Saga Episode III*. "I joined the *Ape Escape* team at an early stage of development," recalls Kaido. "At first, my role was to support Yoshida-san as an associate producer, but as the development progressed, I started giving ideas for the game and I took on a lead designer role as well." The rest of the team, meanwhile, was made up of young, inexperienced graduates. "It's unbelievable now, but people out of college would join a company and stay with the company until retirement," says Yoshida. "That was kind of expected. So it was very hard to hire experienced people from the industry."

In addition to hiring graduates directly, Yoshida benefitted from Sony's Game Yaroze project, a competition ▶

"IT'S UNBELIEVABLE NOW, BUT PEOPLE OUT OF COLLEGE WOULD JOIN A COMPANY AND STAY WITH THE COMPANY UNTIL RETIREMENT"
SHUHEI YOSHIDA

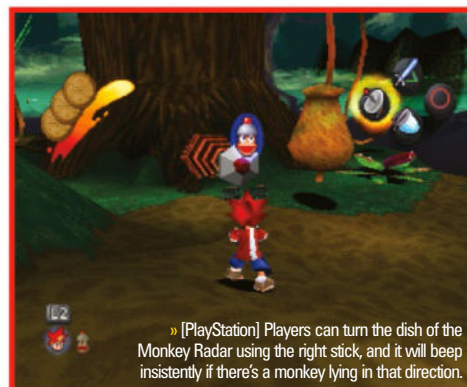
MONKEY TV

THE APE ESCAPE SERIES HAS INSPIRED SEVERAL ANIMATED SHOWS

■ With their cute but gormless expressions, the Pipo Monkeys make a natural fit for comedy, and it wasn't long before they got their own TV show. Shogakukan Music & Digital Entertainment and Sony produced a series of 45-second comedy shorts starring the monkeys for TV Tokyo in 2002, which aired as part of the variety programme *Oha Suta*. There was also a 22-minute short movie released in 2002 called *Ape Escape The Movie: Battle For The Golden Pipo Helmet*. Both the movie and the shorts were released on the same DVD later that year.

The monkeys got a bigger starring role in 2006 with *Saru Get You -On Air-*, a Japanese anime series that loosely adapts storylines from *Ape Escape 3* and the spin-off games *Saru! Get You! Million Monkeys* and *SaruSaru Big Mission*. A second series was produced, for a total of 51 episodes running between October 2006 and September 2007.

Then in 2009, a US *Ape Escape* animation series was launched on Nicktoons. The series was produced by Frederator Studios, Hawaii Film Partners, Project 51 Productions and Showcase Entertainment, and *Earthworm Jim* creator Doug TenNapel was brought in as a writer and storyboard artist. Thirty-eight two-minute episodes were created, and the shorts were later released on DVD in the UK by Lions Gate Home Entertainment in 2013.



» [PlayStation] Players can turn the dish of the Monkey Radar using the right stick, and it will beep insistently if there's a monkey lying in that direction.



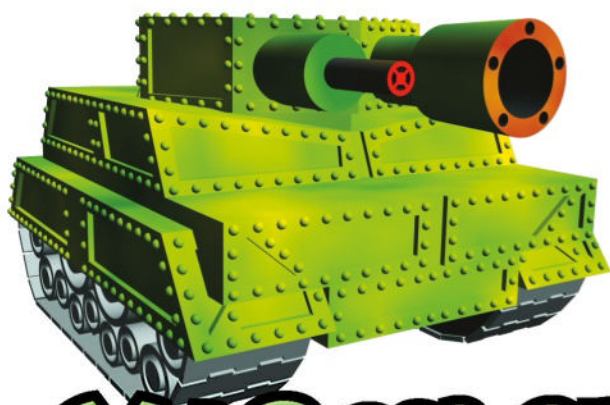
» [PlayStation] This central hub lets you select levels, and there's also a room for gadget training, as well as one for saving and checking your monkey collection.



» [PlayStation] The introduction shows the white monkey Specter discovering a prototype Pipopipe Helmet made by the Professor. It gives him great intelligence but twists his mind.

► where aspiring game designers could send in their ideas (*Devil Dice* is an example of a title that was brought to PlayStation through Game Yaroze). "Sony Computer Entertainment was a joint venture of Sony Corporation and Sony Music Japan, and the game development team came from Sony Music Japan," explains Yoshida. "And in the music industry, they're always doing auditioning, right? So they had the same idea: let's do auditions for young game developer talent. And they were able to find and fund many good teams, but when they hired an individual applicant, they tended to hand them to me, because I was growing the internal team."

Back at this time, the three SCE groups in Europe, America and Japan operated pretty much autonomously. "Each region had its own development [teams], and we didn't know what games were being made in the US and Europe," says Yoshida. "A few times a year we showed our games to other regions, and they got to pick which ones to publish, and vice versa. There was no cohesive portfolio strategy or anything, it was just three different publishers working together. And when we showed the game *Ape Escape*, US marketing [said], 'So, you know, it's interesting, but can you play this game with the regular controller?' And I said, 'Oh no no, that's not the point. We are making a game only playable with the two analogue sticks, the DualShock controller'. And they were like, 'Oh, that's gonna limit the audience, can you make it compatible with the regular controller?' And



MARCH OF THE MONKEYS



APE ESCAPE 2

■ This 2002 sequel for the PlayStation 2 introduced new gadgets like the Water Cannon and Bananarang, as well as new minigames like Dance Monkey Dance and Monkey Football. You play as Jimmy, cousin of original protagonist Spike, on a quest to once again take down Specter.



APE ESCAPE: PUMPED & PRIMED

■ Only released in North America and Japan, this 2004 PS2 spin-off is a party game where up to four players compete in minigames that involve things like collecting coins and battling in submersibles. It received mostly average reviews, including a 5/10 from *Edge*.



EYETOY: MONKEY MANIA

■ The mid-2000s were the peak *Ape Escape* years: in 2004 we not only got *Ape Escape: Pumped & Primed* and the PSP spin-off *Ape Escape Academy*, but also this PS2 title designed around the EyeToy camera. *Monkey Mania* features more than 50 minigames for up to four players.



» [PlayStation] Each level finishes as soon as you collect a specified number of monkeys, but there are more to track down. Some can only be reached with certain gadgets collected later in the game.



» [PlayStation] Shuhei Yoshida wasn't involved in the many *Ape Escape* sequels that followed, and he maintains that the original was the best. "I was very proud of the first game," he says.

THE MAKING OF: APE ESCAPE



» [PlayStation] Capturing naughty monkeys in the past with your Time Net will immediately transport them back to the Professor.



» [PlayStation] This Pteranodon in the Prehistoric Age will pick Spike up and carry him away from its nest.

I was very naive, you know, from a business standpoint, a purist, [saying], "No, no, no, that's not the point, we'll never make it compatible with regular control!"

It's interesting to hear that Yoshida's team met some resistance within Sony to making *Ape Escape* solely playable with the DualShock: from the outside, it seems to make perfect sense to create a title that showcases the DualShock's functions in order to sell more of the controllers. After all, plenty of console makers have commissioned titles in the past to showcase certain peripherals, like Atari did with the VCS' Keyboard Controllers way back in the Seventies. But some within Sony were against the idea.

"Actually, even the business company SCE had some concern about us making a game [that was] only playable with the DualShock and not playable with the regular controller," remembers Yoshida. "I don't know who was concerned, like a legal group or a business

"A FEW TIMES A YEAR WE SHOWED OUR GAMES TO OTHER REGIONS, AND THEY GOT TO PICK WHICH ONES TO PUBLISH, AND VICE VERSA"
SHUHEI YOSHIDA

group, or whoever, but they asked us to present the game to Ken Kutaragi himself. [...] Ken's face lit up as we were showing the game, and clearly he liked what we were doing, because he was the inventor of the DualShock controller. Maybe he liked that the internal game team

was making good use of the controller. So we were allowed to continue."

K enji Kaido remembers that there was a lot of trial and error at the start of development. "But once we fixed on the core idea to 'catch monkeys', the overall game became clearer and clearer," he says. "Instead of the game being changed, the game became more and more polished as we developed it further. There was one turning point that I remember, which was when we decided to target kids as the main audience. We simplified the controls after the decision."

APE ESCAPE HAS SPAWNED OVER A DOZEN SEQUELS AND SPIN-OFFS: HERE ARE SOME NOTABLE ONES



APE ESCAPE 3

■ Specter returns as the antagonist in this 2005 sequel for the PS2, this time setting up television broadcasts that put humans into a mindless trance. It's notable for featuring a minigame based around *Metal Gear Solid*: in turn, 2004's *Metal Gear Solid 3* has a Snake Vs Monkey mode.



SARU! GET YOU! MILLION MONKEYS

■ This Japanese PS2 exclusive from 2006 depicts a full-on war, with FMV news-report footage showing an army of monkeys taking over the world with high-tech robots. The gameplay is more action focussed, where the player guns down monkeys in mech suits before capturing them.



PLAYSTATION MOVE APE ESCAPE

■ The final (so far) game in the *Ape Escape* series is this 2010 title for the PlayStation 3. The action takes place on rails, with the player using the PlayStation Move motion controls to manipulate gadgets. It reviewed poorly, with Eurogamer awarding it just 3/10.



MONKEY CAMEOS

WHERE ELSE HAVE THOSE CHEEKY MONKEYS APPEARED?

■ The monkeys from *Ape Escape* have popped up in various different games over the years, many of them published by Sony. For example, a Pipo Monkey can be unlocked as a caddie in the 2003 PS2 game *Everybody's Golf 4* (although only in the Japanese and European versions), and a Pipo suit can be found in both *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal* from 2004 and *Ratchet: Deadlocked* from 2005. A downloadable Pipo Monkey outfit was featured in 2008's *LittleBigPlanet*, and a Pipo Helmet was given away as free DLC for the 2012 game *Tokyo Jungle*. Memorably, a whole section of the 2024 game *Astro Bot* (below) pays loving homage to the *Ape Escape* series, recreating the monkey-catching action.

But the monkeys have appeared in non-Sony games, too, like Tecmo's *Monster Rancher 4* from 2003, plus a song from *Ape Escape* features in the 2004 PS2 rhythm action game *Taiko no Tatsujin: Atsumare! Matsuri da!! Yondaime*, published by Namco. Most notably, they appear prominently in the Snake Vs Monkey minigame from Konami's *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, where Snake has to sneak up and catch the errant simians. It's been confirmed that this minigame will return in the upcoming remake (above) as well.



» [PlayStation] The Slingshot Shooter gadget lets Spike hit faraway buttons and enemies.



» [PlayStation] Spike has a close encounter with a T-rex, which has a Pipo Monkey catching a ride on its tail.



» [PlayStation] The evil monkey Specter plans to take over the world by sending monkeys back in time to manipulate the past.

► Some early gameplay elements didn't survive, however. Yoshida remembers that originally the monkeys dropped poop. "And when you stepped on it, you'd slip, or something bad happened. And when we did playtesting, a young girl said, 'I really, really, really, really hate the poop.' So we decided to remove the poop." Instead, it was replaced with slippery banana skins that the monkeys drop behind them when you give chase.

Each monkey was given a flashing light on its head, like a police patrol car, to indicate its alertness status, from blue to yellow to red: a bit like how an exclamation mark appears over enemies' heads when they spot the player in *Metal Gear Solid*.

"We were all fans of *Metal Gear* games," smiles Yoshida. And to entice the player to capture all of the monkeys and create replay value, each one was given a name and personality, with each successful capture logged in a database. The main baddie, the evil white monkey Specter, was designed by Takamitsu Iijima, says Yoshida. "The character was trying to be really scary, but is still childish and ends up being comical," he says. "[Takamitsu Iijima] was a huge anime fan, so I think there was lots of inspiration from Japanese anime characters."

The development of *Ape Escape* took around three years. "I remember everything was difficult for us," says Kaido, "but the most difficult aspect was the monkey AI. The programmer struggled a lot to develop the route search algorithm for the monkeys. The AI has to be smart to be fun, but



[PlayStation] The dinghy requires you to rotate the sticks to move the oars, and it can be exceedingly tricky to master.



» [PlayStation] Spike's health is represented by cookies in the top left of the screen. He only has one left here.



» [PlayStation] The jaunty music for *Ape Escape* was composed by Soichi Terada. "We wanted this uplifting kind of Nintendo-like music," recalls Yoshida.



» [PlayStation] Occasionally, Spike will be challenged to a race by his best friend Buzz (Jake in the US version and Hiroki in Japan), who is being mind-controlled by Specter.



» [PlayStation] Spike can shimmy up trees and poles to reach higher levels.

if it is too smart, it does not feel like monkeys. It was a philosophical dilemma."

Kaido also recalls an experiment to use the DualShock's rumble capability in a novel way. "There was an idea to press a button on the player 2 controller to cause vibration for the player 1 controller to cause hindrance to the player," he says. "The idea was to make a rhythm action game mechanic like *Parappa The Rapper*, and if you input correctly on the player 2 controller, a vibration of different rhythm will be caused on the player 1 controller." But in the end, the idea didn't make the final cut.

"I remember coming up with the gameplay was really challenging," says Yoshida, particularly how best to use the right analogue stick. In modern games, this stick is typically used to control the camera, but in *Ape Escape* it was used for everything from directing your Monkey Radar gadget to spinning a hula hoop (the so-called Dash Hoop). "Coming up with those ideas was so hard, and we did so many," says Yoshida. "We prototyped and dropped so many game mechanic ideas when we didn't feel that that mechanic was using the analogue stick in a really interesting way."

Progress on the project slowed to a crawl as the team came up with endless different gadgets necessitating novel uses for the right stick, only for Yoshida and the others in charge to reject them. It got to the point where one day, Yoshida came into his office to discover a note that was signed by the young people

on the development team, who were begging to stop the prototyping and move on with development. They had all written their names in a circle, with their names emanating from the middle like spokes, in order to disguise who was leading the initiative. As soon as he saw the note, Yoshida balled it up and threw it in the bin. "I announced that, 'No, we won't stop prototyping until we have enough good ideas,'" he recalls. "But eventually, I think it paid off."

The middle period of the game's development was "stressful", according to Kaido, before becoming "exciting" towards the end. But Yoshida has nothing but

fond memories of working on *Ape Escape*. "When I get asked, out of all the games I was involved in, which game I had the most fun [on], I would say *Ape Escape*, because I was not only involved as a producer, but I was involved in every creative decision," he says. "I was involved in every aspect of *Ape Escape* as one of the team members, so I enjoyed the process so much." Yoshida would later become less involved in the nitty gritty of day-to-day game development as he rose up Sony's ranks, eventually becoming president of SCE Worldwide Studios in 2008.

Ape Escape received a warm critical reception on its release in 1999, with IGN reviewer Doug Perry awarding it 9.5/10 and praising its "new and refreshing" analogue controls. Kaido recalls that the success of

"WE PROTOTYPED AND DROPPED SO MANY GAME MECHANIC IDEAS WHEN WE DIDN'T FEEL THAT THAT MECHANIC WAS USING THE ANALOGUE STICK IN A REALLY INTERESTING WAY"
SHUHEI YOSHIDA

the game didn't come as a surprise to the team, because it had already received a great response during pre-launch promotions.

And in terms of legacy, it's easy to draw a direct line between *Ape Escape* and the PlayStation 5 games *Astro's Playroom* (2020) and *Astro Bot* (2024), where hunting for monkeys has been replaced by hunting for bots. "Intentionally or not intentionally, *Ape Escape* [showcased] the use of a new peripheral, new hardware for the platform, right?" says Yoshida. "And *Astro Bot* was a really great showcase of the use of haptics or adaptive triggers on PlayStation 5. So, yeah, I can see that kind of transition or legacy. And actually, some of the members from the original *Ape Escape* [team] are still in Team Asobi."

Indeed, Toshitake Tsuchikura, for example, was a programmer on both *Ape Escape* and *Astro Bot*, and the latter features a section that faithfully recreates the monkey-catching gameplay of the 1999 game. "I was so happy to see that!" beams Yoshida. ★



HITMAN

'THE EARLY YEARS

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:**
EIDOS INTERACTIVE
- » **COMPOSER:**
JESPER KYD
- » **DEVELOPER:**
IO INTERACTIVE
- » **RELEASE:**
2000-2006
- » **BEST TRACK:**
SECRET INVASION
(HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY)

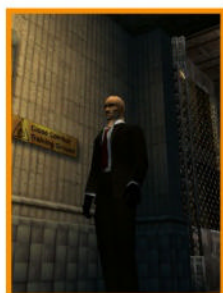
SINCE ITS LATE-2000 RELEASE EXCLUSIVELY FOR PC, HITMAN: CODENAME 47 SPAWNED A FRANCHISE WHICH RODE THE GOLDEN AGE OF SIXTH-GEN CONSOLES. WITH EIGHT MAINLINE TITLES, AND TWO FILM ADAPTATIONS, WE GO BACK TO WHERE IT ALL STARTED WITH ORIGINAL SERIES COMPOSER JESPER KYD

WORDS BY LIAM HEITMANN-RYCE-LEMERCIER

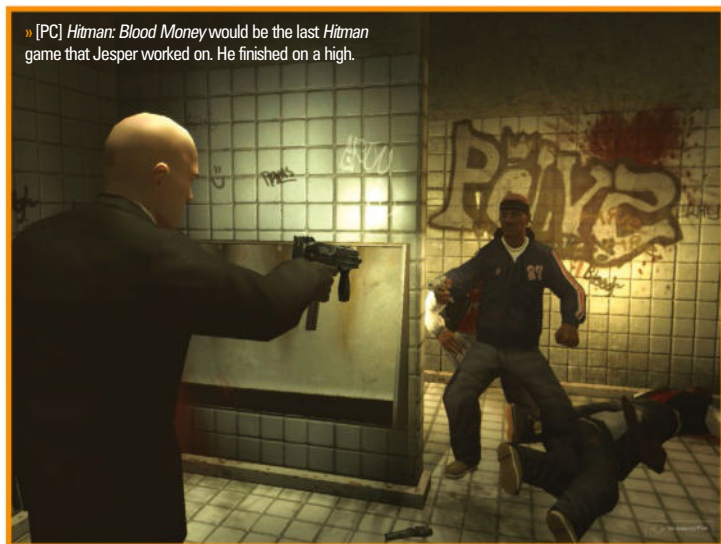
The globe-trotting tactical stealth games of the *Hitman* franchise have given popular culture one of its most iconic protagonists, the bald-headed, barcode-stamped assassin known as Agent 47. Danish publisher IO Interactive has released every mainstream title in the series, from the 2000 debut *Codename 47* to its latest release, *Hitman III*, in 2021.

Rewarding players for executing assassinations that appear to be accidents, with added points for remaining unseen altogether, the *Hitman* games are revered for their atmospheric gameplay and challenging puzzle-solving elements.

A key aspect of their dark, immersive tone was the input of longtime series composer Jesper Kyd. Outside of his work on multiple *Assassin's Creed* titles, *Hitman* remains the franchise for which he is best known, and most adored, today.



» [PC] The score for *Hitman: Agent 47* proved quite difficult for Jesper, though technical improvements aided future games.



» [PC] *Hitman: Blood Money* would be the last *Hitman* game that Jesper worked on. He finished on a high.

Looking back today, 25 years later, he is happy the series still enjoys a secure place in the zeitgeist. “*Hitman* was a game made by my friends that I grew up with, so to see how far the franchise has come is super amazing,” he tells us. “I was there from the beginning and got to see how the game was built, from the ground up, and how it started. A really small idea, it just grew and grew. You know, the first game had its quirks, but it touched on something that I think was so unique.”

Following mostly positive reviews and eventual sales exceeding half a million units, *Codename 47* was followed by three back-to-back titles, releasing every two years. It was this initial run where Jesper served as primary composer, until a six-year hiatus led up to the release of 2012’s generally maligned *Hitman: Absolution*, for which he was not brought back to pen its soundtrack.

The creation of *Codename 47*’s score, meanwhile, was something of a laboured process. Jesper’s creative process was aided by the Windows sound design program DirectMusic, which “looks like a database when you look at it” as he recalls today. “It was very difficult to work in, so I had to basically look away from that program and write all the music in my studio without paying any attention to it, and then fit all the music into the program afterwards.”

It is not a process for which Jesper holds any keen affection, pleased with the rate at which sound design programs have evolved for videogame composers today. The learning curve of Jesper’s stint as the *Hitman* maestro came swiftly after, with the very next game, *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*, demanding a more atmospheric, textured soundscape. The design brief marked a significant step beyond his comfort zone as a



Photos Credit: Ben Bentley

■ Jesper Kyd was the composer of four *Hitman* titles: *Codename 47*, *Silent Assassin*, *Contracts* and *Blood Money*. More recently, he served as the long-running composer of the *Assassin's Creed* games between 2007 and 2020.

» [PC] The mood of the *Hitman* games is aided by a series of ominous scores, which makes sense considering the dark nature of the job.





» [PC] The soundtracks are very evocative of their settings, especially when Agent 47 travels to Hong Kong in *Codename 47*.



» [PC] *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin* saw Jesper creating his first symphonic score for the series.

THE BALD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

The origin story of Agent 47's distinctive back-of-the-head barcode

■ Outside of his signature black suit and blood-red tie, the barcode stamped on the back of Agent 47's head is one of the most iconic design elements in modern gaming. However, the barcode actually serves a functional purpose within series lore.

As a cloned assassin, the barcode specifies where he was created and when: 640509-040147. The first set of numbers represent his 'birth date', 64-05-09, making him 60-years-old today. Supposedly, though, his genetic modifications as a superhuman killing machine render him impervious to ageing. Meanwhile, 04 denotes his clone series, and the 47 of his famed codename denoting his place within that series' production line.

Outside of the identifying details of the barcode's sequence of numbers, it has been speculated among fans that the training facility where Agent 47 was cloned featured security barcode scanners, which would 'read' their cloned assassins and allow them access to different parts of the building.



composer, boldly striding into new territory. "What was interesting about that, I had never written any orchestral music and I was asked to do a fully symphonic score," he remembers. "So I had to teach myself how to do that! So that was tricky, in that aspect, and then *Contracts* and *Blood Money*, I was working on those scores at the same time."

It was *Blood Money*'s extended development time which led to *Contracts* releasing first, a title which Jesper still regards as one of the darkest projects he has ever been a part of. It was this moody atmosphere which inspired the more aggressive, electronica-influenced score as compared with the previous entries.

"That game is very, very dark and very electronic. The music went all the way, into that whole stratosphere," he says today. It was an endeavour which heartily paid off. For his work on *Hitman: Contracts*, Jesper won the 2005 BAFTA Game Award for Best Original Music.

For all his achievements in establishing the sound and atmosphere of the *Hitman* series at its earliest inception, Jesper's time in the series did not extend beyond *Blood Money* in 2006, notable for its distinct, orchestra-driven score. The series received a soft reboot of sorts in 2016, starting a new trilogy that was repackaged as the *World Of Assassination* bundle. It still receives fresh DLC to this day, despite the last entry in the trilogy releasing four years ago.

"I don't have a connection to *World Of Assassination*," Jesper admits. "The team I worked with, they're gone, the company was sold. So it's all new people there, they have their own composer they work with," referring to fellow Dane Niels Bye Nielsen. "I



» [PC] *Hitman: Contracts* saw Jesper winning the BAFTA for Best Original Music.

always saw the *Hitman* world as something really operatic, something really classical. I don't know if my view of creating some really dark opera music, if that would work for the *Hitman* world today..."

The more clinical, minimalist approach to the *Hitman* games of eighth-gen consoles represents a stark difference to the brooding, dramatic scores of *Silent Assassin* et al. Fittingly, Jesper's music has been reorchestrated as the *Hitman Suite* and frequently receives performances with symphony orchestras around the world.

2024 saw the world premiere of Jesper's *Hitman Suite 2* by the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, featuring in-character narration by Agent 47's legacy voice actor David Bateson.

Interest in Jesper's original work on the first four *Hitman* games remains as strong today as it ever was, with these early games continuing to garner positive reappraisal under the spotlight of *World Of Assassination*. It stands as a killer legacy for the Danish composer. ★



ULTIMATE GUIDE

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI

DEVIL SUMMONER

RAIDOU KUZUNOHA vs THE SOULLESS ARMY

OF THE MANY SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI SPIN-OFFS THAT ATLUS HAS RELEASED, DEVIL SUMMONER: RAIDOU KUZUNOHA VS THE SOULLESS ARMY IS SOMETHING OF A HIDDEN GEM. WITH A NEW REMASTER ON THE WAY, WE REPLAY THE CULT CLASSIC ACTION RPG AND SPEAK WITH DIRECTOR KAZUYUKI YAMAI ABOUT RAIDOU'S ENDURING APPEAL

WORDS BY JAMES TOCCHIO



» [PlayStation 2] Legally distinct Pokébal- errr... Kuda Tubes are used for capturing Raidou's demon allies.

In the early Noughties, Atlus had reached a tipping point. Though critically successful, its games had not found enough of a mainstream audience to ensure the company's survival. By 2003, the financial situation had become so dire that Atlus game director Kazuyuki Yamai said the company, "Was on the verge of being shut down."

Yet historical inflection points such as these are naturally unpredictable. Atlus may have been on the brink of collapse, but it also stood on the threshold of success. The 2003 PlayStation 2 release of *Shin Megami Tensei 3: Nocturne* found greater mainstream appeal than previous titles and gave the company a new lease on life. It also marked the unofficial beginning of many of the core game design sensibilities that define the modern Atlus we know today.

But Atlus was not quite out of the woods. In another interview, game director Katsura Hashino recalled that if 2006's *Persona 3* had failed commercially, it would have

"ATLUS WEAVES AN EPISODIC STORY INVOLVING A KIDNAPPED HEIRESS, NOBLE FAMILIES POSSESSED BY DEMONS, THE EXPLOITATION OF POLITICAL POWER AND THE DANGERS OF HYPER-MILITARISATION"

been the final Atlus game. But *Persona 3* succeeded in the market and established what would become the tonal and stylistic blueprint for the next two decades worth of Atlus' most popular games.

For the second time in a three-year period, the "Atlus spirit" had saved the company. Released between these two tent pole games, was a lesser-known spin-off title in the *Shin Megami Tensei (SMT)* series. Part supernatural *Pokémon*, part

Thirties detective noir story, *Devil Summoner: Raidou Kuzunoha Vs The Soulless Army* for the PlayStation 2 didn't garner as much attention as the games that came just before and after it, but it introduced into the Atlus playbook a number of unusual and interesting game mechanics, told an intricate and mature

story, and for a certain segment of the RPG community, it became a beloved classic. Now, nearly 20 years later, *RAIDOU Remastered* intends to update the game for a modern audience and introduce newer Atlus fans to this distinct entry in the sprawling *SMT* universe.

In some ways, Raidou Kuzunoha is a typical Atlus protagonist. Designed by Kazuma Kaneko, who created most of the company's iconic characters over the last 30 years, Raidou certainly looks the part. And true to type, he's a high school student and silent protagonist, being a stand-in for the player's own thoughts and personality.

However, and this may surprise Atlus fans who discovered the studio's work through the *Persona* series, Raidou's status as a high school student doesn't factor into the game at all. Instead, you focus more closely on his atypical extracurricular



MAESTRO MEGURO

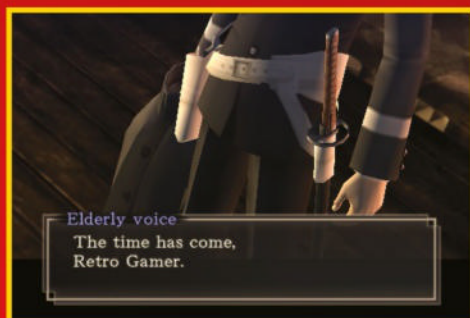
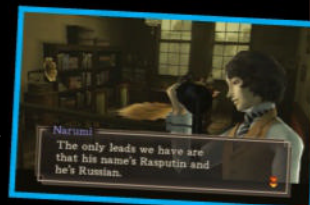
THE LONGTIME ATLUS COMPOSER WORKS HIS MAGIC ONCE AGAIN

■ It wouldn't be an Atlus game without a phenomenal soundtrack. Here, as in *Persona* and many other series, the work

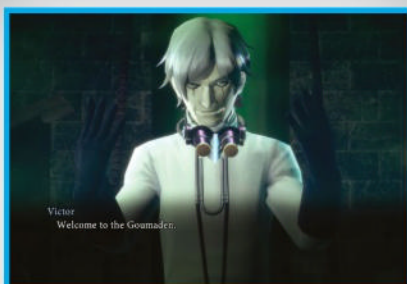
of Shoji Meguro shines with quite possibly some of his most eclectic compositions. *Raidou's* soundtrack merges jazz and rock music with more traditional Japanese motifs, incorporating woodwind and taiko drum sounds into Meguro's typical upbeat comps. The main theme even features some big band influence, with blazing horns carrying the mood.

Like the game's strange blend of Taisho-era folklore and noir detective fiction, it somehow all comes together beautifully. Tracks like *Raidou's Theme* throb with energy, creeping forward with muted trumpets and laid-back percussion before launching into a crescendo of optimistic horns. Chill and relaxing grooves meander along in the Narumi Detective Agency. Battle themes are thick with chunky guitar riffs and up-tempo snares, while tinkling pianos lay down a melody as somber as tears in places like the Nameless Shrine.

Even amongst Atlus' rich catalogue of soundtracks, *Raidou's* music feels unique. It's elegant and moody, modern and traditional. Like the game in which it exists, it's alluring and mysterious, a moonlit alley where jazz pours out of upstairs windows and ancient spirits loiter just out of sight.



» [PlayStation 2] Choose your name wisely and begin your quest as the Devil Summoner, Raidou Kuzunoha XIV.



» [PlayStation 5] With nearly double the number of demons as found in the original release, Dr Victor will be busier than ever.

RAIDOU Remastered

DISCOVER HOW ATLUS IS UPDATING
ITS CULT CLASSIC FOR A NEW
GENERATION OF FANS

■ The original PlayStation 2 release of *Raidou Kuzunoha Vs The Soulless Army* is by most measures a special game. Elsewhere in this article we've praised its immaculate vibes, gripping story, and unique scenario, and all that stands true. But it's not a perfect game, and in some ways, it hasn't aged gracefully. *RAIDOU Remastered* aims to fix those design elements that feel a bit too 2006.

The original game's real-time action RPG combat was an interesting departure from Atlus' traditional turn-based formula, but in practice, it was limited and quickly grew repetitive. *RAIDOU Remastered* overhauls the combat system in several meaningful ways. There are almost double the number of capturable demons, and Raidou can now summon two demons at once, up from one in the original. He can also learn Summoner Skills that exploit enemy weaknesses and unleash contextual moves in battle. His mobility has been enhanced, the controls are more responsive, and a lock-on feature has been added.

Overworld navigation has also been streamlined. Random battles no longer occur everywhere, and Express Streetcars allow instant travel to previously visited locations. A Detective Journal helps keep you on track, while a mini-map and objective displays ensure you know where to go. There's an autosave, a continue feature, and the ability to warp to the Gouma-den or Konnou-ya store from any save point. Nakisawame now heals for free, too!



» [PlayStation 5] Massive overhauls to the game's movement and combat system help modernise the action.



» [PlayStation 2] With Dr Victor's help, you're able to fuse demons together to create new, more powerful demons.



» [PlayStation 2] A moderately sized overworld is mapped out and navigable by Raidou and his demon allies.

► activities; Raidou is a private detective and a Devil Summoner, a spiritual guardian that protects the Japanese capital from malevolent demons.

The setting is also different from Atlus' more popular fare, taking place in a fictionalised 1930, during Year 20 of the Taishō Period (a time which never really occurred, since Japan's Taishō period only lasted the 14 years from 1912 to 1926). This period in Japan's history was one of economic prosperity and rapid Westernisation, a time in which the sudden shift to modernity and the influx of great wealth caused friction between those who cherished traditional Japanese values and those who would embrace a more worldly capitalism.

Against this restless backdrop, *Raidou Kuzunoha Vs The Soulless Army* weaves an episodic story involving a kidnapped heiress, noble families possessed by demons, the exploitation of political power and the dangers of hyper-militarisation. This story is one of the game's strongest assets. Each episode is more surprising than the one that preceded it, and by the finale, what begins as a procedural mystery spirals into a frightful cataclysm involving the reanimated Russian mystic, Rasputin, deadly cyborgs, demonic super soldiers, time travel and space rockets.

Raidou's core gameplay is similarly surprising. It involves travelling in and around the Japanese capital city, collecting



» [PlayStation 2] The Dark Realm is a spirit world filled with demons and danger in which Raidou and Gouto often find themselves.



» [PlayStation 2] The mysteries surrounding Kaya and the Soulless Army only become darker and more tangled as you go.

information to solve mysteries, and battling the forces of evil with the help of a small cast of friends and acquaintances.

Shouhei Narumi is Raidou's partner at the Narumi detective agency. He's the archetypal pal whose carefree laziness hides true loyalty. Then there's Gouto-Douji, a black cat summoned from the spirit world to guide Raidou in his work as a Devil Summoner. Tae Asakura is a driven feminist news reporter whose work

brings her into close partnership with Raidou and Shouhei.

These characters, and the game's many secondary and tertiary characters, are fully realised. The heroes are

charming and endearing, and their unique personalities and clear motivations urge you to care about what happens to them. The antagonists are evil, but complicated, and the characters whom they victimise are frail and worthy of sympathy. Often, the bad guys are victims, and the victims are bad guys. It's all strongly written, highly nuanced, and well-articulated.

The game's first small mysteries quickly blossom into full conspiracies with global ramifications, and as you gather clues and solve problems, you continually come into conflict with malevolent demons. These random encounters occur often (perhaps too often) and give you the opportunity to fight or capture demons, a la Pokémon.

By weakening a demon in combat and critically striking it with its elemental opposite, you can seal it in one of Raidou's ►

**"THE GAME'S FIRST
SMALL MYSTERIES SOON
BLOSSOM INTO FULL ON
CONSPIRACIES WITH
GLOBAL RAMIFICATIONS..."**

RAIDOU WHO-ZUNOHA?

A SHORT LIST OF SOULLESS ARMY'S CHARACTERS, DESIGNED BY ATLUS LEGEND KAZUMA KANEKO

KAYA DAIDOUJI

■ A high school student and the only daughter of one of the capital's wealthiest families, Kaya Daidouji is a victimised child and our first glimpse of the *Soulless Army* plot. She desperately begs Raidou to break her family's curse. Predictably, things get worse before they get better...

RAIDOU KUZUNOHA XIV

■ The silent protagonist, Raidou is a high school student, detective, and the 14th Kuzunoha Devil Summoner. He uses his katana, revolver and demon allies to battle dark supernatural forces in the Japanese capital. His design by Kazuma Kaneko predates the game by several years.

TAE ASAKURA

■ Tae serves as one of Raidou's informants and occasional clients. As a journalist, she writes under the pen name Kichou in honour of the pioneering feminist Hiratsuka Raicho. She'll do whatever it takes to report on supernatural happenings in the capital, despite a fear of ghosts.

DR VICTOR

■ The owner of the Gouma-Den, a secret laboratory underneath the Konnou-Ya shop, he is a scientist who has studied and discovered the existence of innumerable demons. He helps Raidou maintain and evolve his collected demons. Victor's name is a nod to the scientist in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*.



SHOUEI NARUMI

■ Narumi is the owner of Narumi Detective Agency and Raidou's partner and boss. He was once a soldier but left the service after becoming disillusioned by the corruption of the military. He's lazy, but quietly capable of physical and mental excellence when properly motivated.

GOUTO-DOUJI

■ A very special black cat with green eyes, Gouto has been a mentor and guide to every Kuzunoha Devil Summoner. He's snarky, but extremely loyal and good-hearted, often helping Raidou accomplish his missions. Eventual revelations indicate that Gouto is a truly special cat.

GREGORI RASPUTIN

■ A real-life historical figure, the legendary Russian mystic and faith healer appears in *The Soulless Army* as a secondary antagonist. In the game, he is portrayed as a Dark Devil Summoner, employed by the main antagonist to ensure the success of the Soulless Army project.

GENERAL MUNAKATA

■ The game's central antagonist, General Munakata is a leader in the Japanese Imperial Army and the secretive head of the Soulless Army project. While he once did everything in his power to protect the people of Japan, he has become seemingly obsessed with destroying the capital.



» [PlayStation 2] Demons can use special abilities outside of combat. Here, Jack Frost freezes a path forward.



» [PlayStation 2] In combat, barriers may appear which can only be broken by demons of a certain type.



» [PlayStation 2] A Pagan Demon reads the mind of a hairy-chested foreigner, revealing a clue.

Kuda Tubes, glowing spiritual capture devices that definitely aren't Pokébells. Once captured, demons can be stored and collected, fused with other demons to create new demons, and summoned in battles and in the game's overworld, where their special abilities allow for contextual manipulation of the environment and its people.

For example, some demons can read minds, which Raidou can exploit to solve mysteries. Others might be able to charm weak-minded humans, or move enormous physical objects, or spontaneously freeze water, allowing Raidou to reach otherwise inaccessible locations. The collection and use of these demons is another of the game's great strengths. These creatures are stunningly designed, and each demon has a distinct

"WITH A REMASTERED RELEASE JUST AROUND THE CORNER, THERE'S NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME TO BE A FAN OF RAIDOU KUZUNOHA"

personality, so that interacting with them is an interesting experience.

Things cool off when you jump into combat. Raidou's battle system is interesting in theory, in that it eschews the *SMT* series' typical

turn-based gameplay in favour of a blended action RPG system in which Raidou simply shoots and slashes his way through enemies. Unfortunately, combat in *Soulless Army* is so basic and clumsy that it becomes the weakest part of the game. Raidou can block, attack with a sword, or shoot his revolver. But that's it. The result is that you spend a lot of time pressing the same button over and over and seeing the same three-slash combo.

Critics of the time, and even the game's developers, recognised the flaw. In the game's sequel, *Raidou Kuzunoha Vs King Abaddon*, the greatest single improvement came in the form of a significantly expanded

combat system. In *King Abaddon*, you have access to weak and heavy slashes which can be chained together in lengthy, fluid combos. Your gun has limitless ammo, and it tactically stuns enemies. Raidou can dodge and roll, he can summon two demons simultaneously, command them to perform turn-based-style attacks, and demons are easier to capture. All in all, the sequel's gameplay is just better.

But complaints noted, the combat's not terrible, it's just not very fun, and on balance it's not poor enough to spoil the game. You work through substandard combat to experience the game's exceptional atmosphere, characters, and story, and in the end, it's all worth it. These elements make *Raidou Kuzunoha Vs The Soulless Army* a totally unique cult classic, and it's an RPG and a *SMT* game worth playing today. With a remastered version just around the corner, there's never been a better time to be a fan of Raidou Kuzunoha. ✨

30 YEARS OF DEVIL SUMMONER

A PARTIAL OVERVIEW OF THIS LESSER-KNOWN SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI SPIN-OFF SERIES



DEVIL SUMMONER

Sega Saturn 1995; PSP 2005

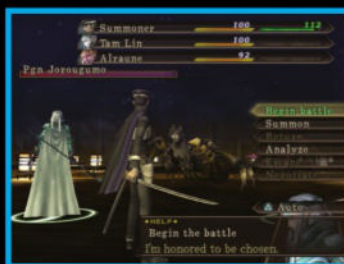
■ The second spin-off of *Shin Megami Tensei* (following *SMT If...*), *Devil Summoner* introduced players to the supernatural detectives of the Kuzunoha clan. In Japan, *Devil Summoner* became one of the Sega Saturn's best-selling games and was later ported to the PlayStation Portable. Unfortunately, neither version saw a worldwide release.



DEVIL SUMMONER: SOUL HACKERS

Sega Saturn, PlayStation 1997; Nintendo 3DS 2012

■ The second game in the *Devil Summoner* series, *Soul Hackers* released for the Sega Saturn in 1997. Its narrative takes the form of a cyberpunk detective story, and its gameplay features the slow dungeon crawling of early *SMT* games. A 3DS port released outside of Japan in 2012.



DEVIL SUMMONER: RAIDOU KUZUNOHA VS KING ABADDON

PlayStation 2 2008

■ *Raidou Kuzunoha Vs King Abaddon* is a direct sequel to *Soulless Army*. The game retains all the charm of its predecessor in its characters and plot while adding several positive quality-of-life changes and notable improvements to the battle system, demon-capturing mechanic and overworld travel.



SOUL HACKERS 2

Windows, PlayStation, Xbox 2022

■ The fifth and most recent original game in the series, and a sequel to 1997's *Soul Hackers*, *Soul Hackers 2* is set in a hyper-neon cyberpunk future city in which Devil Summoners channel their demons through computers called COMPs. It's a super stylish, modern, underrated game.



ADDITIONAL MEDIA

■ From its earliest days, *Devil Summoner* has expanded into several branches of media, including two live-action TV series and several novels, manga, mobile phone games, and even a two-part CD drama. The *Raidou Kuzunoha* series has continued with manga illustrated or drafted by Kazuma Kaneko.

KAZUYUKI YAMAI

WE TALK WITH THE DIRECTOR OF RAIDOU REMASTERED: THE MYSTERY OF THE SOULLESS ARMY



How would you introduce RAIDOU to fans of more recent Atlus games?

RAIDOU Remastered is a mystery drama where the player takes on the role of a named character, Raidou Kuzunoha, and aims to solve supernatural cases. I believe this will feel especially fresh and enjoyable for those who have played other Atlus games.

You previously directed SMT: Nocturne HD Remaster. What are the unique challenges of remastering classic games?

When remastering a title that I originally developed myself, I try to recall the ideal vision I had for the game, then carefully compare that vision with the fans' memories as I make decisions about the game's development. We have become more conscious of balancing creativity and service. That's why, compared to *SMT: Nocturne HD Remaster*, we made even more changes to *RAIDOU Remastered* from a service-oriented perspective.

How do you balance fresh gameplay mechanics with preservation of the original game?

We preserve [what made the original so appealing] but change anything that no longer fits the times. For example, since Raidou has a cool and mysterious charm, we felt it was acceptable to add new combat actions and mechanics even if it meant deviating from the original, but we were careful to avoid making him overly chatty, as that would fundamentally change his personality.

Which updates do you believe will be most significant for fans who played the game in the Noughties?

Some of the major changes include the large-scale update to the battle system, the fact that you no longer encounter enemies everywhere, even in town, and the increased number of demons, which has made Demon Fusion more interesting.

The original game features the work of iconic artists like Kazuma Kaneko and Shoji Meguro. How do you ensure that their contributions are maintained during the remastering?

I try not to make unnecessary changes. On the other hand, if I feel that those qualities weren't sufficiently expressed, I make improvements to establish the artistic vision that should have been realised. I have great respect for Mr Kaneko and Mr Meguro, and I am always mindful of respecting not only their work, but also the feelings of the fans who supported the original version.

What challenges came when integrating voice acting into a game that did not originally have it?

We were concerned that adding voice acting might detract

from the memories that fans have of the original. The English and Japanese voice actors were extremely talented, so we achieved both a naturalness that feels as if the game had voice acting from the beginning, and an increased sense of drama brought by the addition of voices.

With the game industry facing layoffs and studio closures, many Japanese studios pride themselves on long-term talent retention. Has this contributed to Atlus' success?

It's never easy to hear about layoffs. I think many dev teams in Japan have been fortunate because, rather than simply pursuing larger development scales, we had an environment and a customer base that allowed us to continue focussing on the fundamental essence of gameplay.

At Atlus I believe the presence of a veteran staff has allowed that approach — striving for the essence of gameplay, aiming for unique game content, the so-called "Atlus spirit" lives on within the company. And since we constantly bring in new developers, that spirit is always being updated.

A legendary game creator at Nintendo once told us about their favourite snack for late-night game development. What is your favourite food or drink for working at the office?

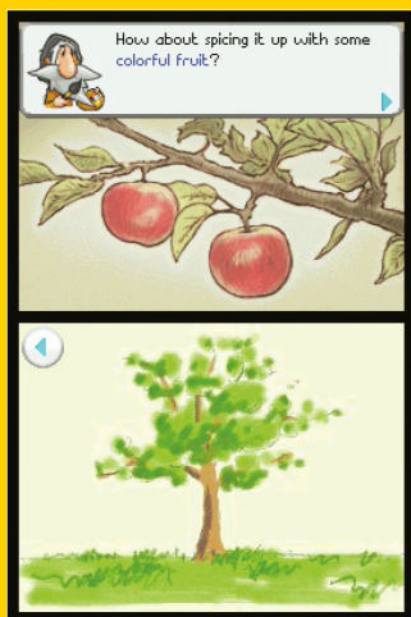
That's an interesting question! I'm curious to know who that creator is (laughs). And I also can't do without snacks while I work. I have a sweet tooth, and I love Meiji Essel Super Cup ice cream. Drizzling some strong coffee over the vanilla flavour in the cup makes it incredibly delicious. I also regularly eat Doramocchi Anko & Whip, which is sold at Lawson (a convenience store chain in Japan), to enjoy a touch of elegance while working after lunch.

Finally, what are your favourite retro games, and how do they inspire you?

Super Mario Bros has been my textbook for game design ever since I was in elementary school. *Metroid* is a showcase of ideas to keep gameplay from becoming boring. *Ridge Racer*'s soundtrack representing a genre that hadn't existed in the game industry until then taught me it's okay to draw inspiration from other entertainment fields. And the MSX version of *The Goonies* was a cautionary example that taught me that trying to pursue a port that's just not meant to be can only lead to disappointment (laughs).



Hardware Heaven



ESSENTIAL GAME

Art Academy

While the DS has plenty of classic games, one of the most notable things about the console was its range of non-gaming releases such as *Cooking Guide* and *100 Classic Book Collection*. Of these, *Art Academy* stands out as a piece of software that really benefits from the DSi XL, simply because the extra screen space functions as a larger canvas. The game also offers benefits to DSi users in the form of a camera mode, allowing you to snap photos to use as references for your own creations.





DSi XL

» MANUFACTURER: Nintendo » YEAR: 2009

» COST: £159.99 (launch), £60+ (today, boxed), £40+ (today, unboxed)

The success of the Nintendo DS meant that it had quite a few hardware revisions, and this was the last of the bunch. The DSi XL launched in Japan on 21 November 2009 – the fifth anniversary of the DS launch – before following to other territories in the spring of 2010. The system is a very straightforward revision of the DSi, simply being larger and heavier to accommodate bigger displays and a battery with greater capacity. Visually, the only noteworthy difference is a more pronounced curve at the corners of the hardware.

Satoru Iwata cautioned that people “may misunderstand it as a system dedicated for seniors” and argued that the DSi XL’s larger screens and improved viewing angles would “offer a new play style where those who are surrounding the game player can also join in”. A second hinge-locking position, designed for tabletop play, was included to support this. The DSi XL tends to be the least common and therefore most expensive model of the hardware, owing to its late introduction during the declining years of the format. ★

DSi XL fact

■ Five game card releases are exclusive to the DSi, due to reliance on camera features. They are *Face Training*, *Foto Showdown*, *Hidden Photo*, *Picture Perfect Hair Salon* and *System Flow*.

PROCESSORS: 32-BIT ARM9 (133 MHZ), 32-BIT ARM7 (33 MHZ)

GRAPHICS: TWO 256X192 RESOLUTION DISPLAYS, TWO 2D ENGINES (FOUR BACKGROUND LAYERS, 128 SPRITES PER FRAME), 3D ENGINE (UP TO 122,880 POLYGONS PER SECOND)

STORAGE: 256MB FLASH MEMORY, SD CARD (UP TO 32GB, OPTIONAL)

POWER: 1050 MAH RECHARGEABLE LITHIUM ION BATTERY (APPROX. 13-17 HOURS PLAY)

MEDIA: NINTENDO DS GAME CARD (UP TO 512MB)

AUDIO: 16 STEREO PCM/ADPCM CHANNELS

RAM: 16MB

1000



The House Of The Dead: Overkill

CHEAP THRILLS

» RETROREVIVAL



» WII » 2009 » HEADSTRONG GAMES

One of the things I love about Nintendo's Wii, isn't just the creativity of its best games, its many excellent first-party titles and its sheer accessibility, but also the huge number of lightgun games it features.

From arcade adaptations like *Ghost Squad* and *Mad Dog McCree* to original exclusives such as *Western Heroes* and *Link's Crossbow Training*, it really felt like you were spoiled for choice, and the Wiimote itself made for an excellent substitute lightgun.

By far the best lightgun games of this era though were those that attempted to greatly expand the concept of what a lightgun game could be, dispensing with the shortness, yet chaotic fun, that arcade-style lightgun games typically offered in favour of a more story-driven affair.

While I rate *Dead Space: Extraction* as the best of these experiments, Capcom's *Resident Evil Chronicles* games and Headstrong Games' take on *The House Of The Dead* series are also worthy of your time.

Although an improved version of *Overkill* would appear on the PS3 with enhanced visuals and additional levels, the original Wii release still holds up brilliantly today and remains gloriously silly fun. Headstrong Games' decision to go all in with a grind-house theme is a solid choice, as it not only makes *Overkill* stand out from other lightgun games of the time, but also other Wii games. That's not to say that adult-rated games don't exist on Nintendo's console, but few others were as gleefully over the top when it came to gore, extreme violence and, of course, lots of naughty words.

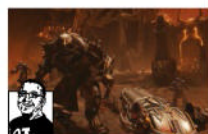
While Agent G certainly isn't prone to the odd swear, it's the foul-mouthed Detective Isaac Washington (brilliantly portrayed by Anthony Aroya) who leaves the biggest impression, with his incredulity of what he's experiencing leading to some ridiculous swear-y one-liners that enhances the schlocky feel that Headstrong Games was clearly aiming for.

There's more to *Overkill* than just swears and gore though, and I'd argue that it ranks alongside *THOTD 2* as a jewel of the series thanks to its memorable bosses, a surprisingly enjoyable plot, satisfying gunplay and a solid selection of weapons. It is also still extremely cheap to buy, so do yourself a favour and grab one of the Wii's silliest, but most entertaining games. You can thank me later. ✱



» It's a furious fighting festival this month, as Capcom gathers some of its most interesting entries in the genre for another collection. Over the page, you'll find more reviews, including Jeff Minter's remake of *I, Robot* and the latest Evercade cartridge

* PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

Doom: The Dark Ages
Although it arrived a little too late for review, I'm really having a tremendous time with it.



NICK

Capcom Fighting Collection 2
My Dreamcast is broken, so I'm really fortunate that I've got a way to play *Capcom Vs SNK 2* again.



» [PlayStation 5] King kicks Rugal's face right into next week. He deserves it, really.

Capcom Fighting Collection 2

A BRAWL FOR ALL

INFORMATION

- » **FORMAT REVIEWED:** PS4 (VIA PS5)
- » **OTHER FORMATS:** XBOX ONE, XBOX SERIES X/S, SWITCH, PC
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- » **BUY IT FROM:** ONLINE, RETAIL
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



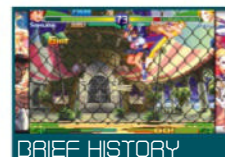
The depth of Capcom's fighting game roster is crazy, when you take a moment

to think about it. Although this is *Capcom Fighting Collection 2*, it could just as easily be called *Capcom Fighting Collection 4*, given the dedicated *Street Fighter* and *Marvel Vs Capcom* collections that already exist – yet it might just be the best of these collections to date, depending on your perspective. You see, while Capcom's previous collections have focussed pretty strictly on 2D fighting games, *Capcom Fighting Collection 2* offers both more in the way of variety and

games that haven't been so easy to get hold of.

Of course, you do get some great 2D fighters – *Capcom Vs SNK Pro* and *Capcom Vs SNK 2* are classic crossovers that need no introduction, while *Street Fighter Alpha 3 Upper* is an update that incorporates the characters added to the console games. *Project Justice* is a school-themed 3D fighter that lets you fight in teams, while *Plasma Sword* is a sci-fi weapon-based 3D fighter. Then you get *Power Stone* and its sequel, chaotic 3D games with open arenas and lots of items, and finally *Capcom Fighting Evolution*, an underwhelming 2D crossover fighter that brings together *Street Fighter*, *Darkstalkers* and *Red Earth* characters.

Even with the games directly related to one another, it feels like everything offers something different enough to be worth trying out. *Capcom Vs SNK Pro* has a unique balancing system that sets it apart from its sequel, while the two-player *Power Stone* is a bit more restrained than its four-player sibling, as the sequel introduces more interactive stages



BRIEF HISTORY

» Thanks to Capcom's prolific history in the fighting game genre, it has a rich back catalogue of fighting games for compilations of this kind. This generation's efforts began with *Street Fighter 30th Anniversary Collection*, which arrived in 2018 courtesy of Digital Eclipse. Capcom then took its efforts in-house, with the first *Capcom Fighting Collection* gathering the *Darkstalkers* series and other one-offs such as *Cyberbots* and *Red Earth* in 2022. In 2024, *Marvel Vs Capcom Fighting Collection: Arcade Classics* compiled the developer's comic book crossover fighters as well as *The Punisher*.





» [PlayStation 5] It's a delight to be running around and throwing objects in *Power Stone* again.



» [PlayStation 5] This ganging up in *Project Justice* doesn't really seem fair. Were fights at school ever fair?

that lean towards party play. It's worth noting that the games in the collection are the arcade versions, have not been readily available for a long time, and all of them offer both local multiplayer and online play with rollback netcode.

The settings available are great, too. As well as game-specific options like choosing how many players survive a round of *Power Stone 2*, you can choose English or Japanese editions, you can unlock secret characters, and even choose whether or not to show arcade boot screens. You'll find a variety of CRT filters and they all look pretty good, which is still surprisingly uncommon. Although the image scaling can look a bit uneven by default, the options allow you just enough

flexibility that you'll find a look to match your taste. What's really cool is the ability to boost the internal resolution of the games for a smoother look, which looks great in the fully 3D games – though it does highlight the low resolution of the sprites in games which also use 2D.

A museum mode is also available, allowing you to play the music from each game and view plenty of artwork, from development sketches to character art and arcade instruction sheets. This is all very welcome, though it's a shame that there's not much context given to the artwork – all you get is a simple title, and it would have been nice to see more detailed explanations of what is being presented, in a similar



» [PlayStation 5] Scaling options can help to make games like *Plasma Sword* look nicer up close.



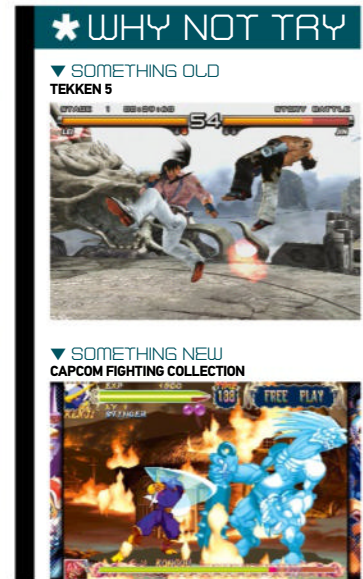
» [PlayStation 5] It's always nice to see archive content in retro collections, even without context.



manner to Digital Eclipse's recent retro compilations.

Unfortunately, we do have some complaints. First off, it's baffling that you can't keep more than one quick save. We don't mean one per game, either – if you want to create a quick save in one game, you'll have to sacrifice whatever else you had saved. Secondly, some of the settings online may not be to your taste, with *Capcom Vs SNK 2* in particular forced to the *EO* edition rules. Lastly, there's the fact that *Rival Schools* and *Star Gladiator* aren't included, despite the presence of their sequels. We can only assume that there may be technical issues or rights issues involved, as they aren't found on other Capcom compilations, but it does leave things feeling incomplete.

Despite those complaints, this is a very strong collection as seven of the eight games are well



worth your time, and it caters for all fighting preferences. The hardcore crowd will be thrilled to see *Capcom Vs SNK 2* again, the *Power Stone* games will appeal to fans of party fighters like the *Super Smash Bros* games, and the over-the-top action of *Project Justice* deserves an audience beyond wealthy Dreamcast owners. There's even a *Street Fighter* game if all you want is reassuring familiarity. ★

In a nutshell

If you've got any interest in fighting games, it's hard to see how you wouldn't find something to love in this collection. The *Capcom Vs SNK* games and *Power Stone* games alone could justify the cost, so everything else feels like an added bonus.

➤➤ Score **85%**



» [PlayStation 5] Boosting the resolution for *Capcom Vs SNK 2* really highlights the low-res sprites.

* PICK OF THE MONTH

I, Robot

» System: PC (tested), PS4, PS5, Switch, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X » Buy it for: £12.79+ » Buy it from: Online



The original *I, Robot* from Dave Theurer was terribly impressive for its time, featuring astonishing flat-shaded 3D polygon graphics, a set of inventive levels and interesting game mechanics.

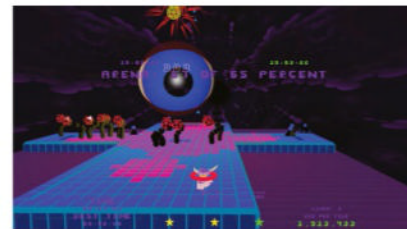
Jeff Minter has taken that DNA and added his own unique blend of mayhem, psychedelia and pulsing audio to create an update that eclipses the brilliant original (sorry, Dave).

At its core, *I, Robot* shares similarities with *Q*bert* as you have to paint over the tiled floor before you can move to the next stage. This is easier said than done, as there are numerous gaps that need to be jumped across and many enemies inhabit each level, and coming into contact with them means instant death. Another hazard to consider is the giant eye which guards the entry to the next stage. While it largely acts as a sentry, it will kill you if it catches you jumping while its eye is red, adding an extra wrinkle of complexity.

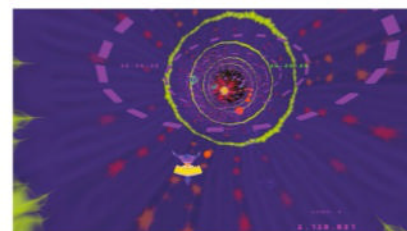
Once a stage is completed you'll jet off to the next, shooting down enemies and avoiding hazards as you go – reach the end without dying and you'll secure an extra life. As you'd expect from Jeff Minter there's more frantic shooting than there was in the original and there's also a barrage of sounds, colours and shapes that can become a little too distracting. There's lots of neat new ideas too, like the inclusion of new open arenas where you need to clear a set amount of the grid before you can move on and useful power-up squares. Minter has even put a new spin on Doodle City (*I, Robot*'s sub-game) that shows off his latest visualiser. It can be difficult to work out what tiles still need to be cleared on certain stages and as levels grow they can become difficult to navigate, but this is more Minter magic and a remake that easily outdoes the original. Don't miss it.

>>

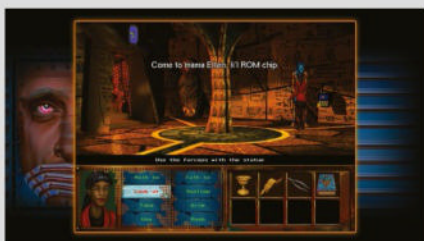
Score 87%



» [PC] These stages require a certain amount of the arena to be coloured in. Luckily, exploding enemies paint large sections of it, making your task much easier.



» [PC] No, it's not *Tempest*, but it is a nice slice of shooting to break up the more puzzle-like main levels.



I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream

» System: PS5 (tested), PS4, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S, Switch, PC » Buy it for: £7.99 » Buy it from: Online

This expanded adaptation of Harlan Ellison's short story was initially released in 1995, and puts you in control of five different humans who have been trapped and tortured by a sentient computer. The original point-and-click interface has been mapped to the controller well, with actions assigned to buttons, and there are a few basic but welcome visual options. The game's grim atmosphere and presentation set it apart from the majority of videogames 30 years ago, making it challenging in a way that has little to do with simple difficulty, and it's just as impactful today.

NICK THORPE

>>

Score 85%



Evercade: Atari Arcade 2

» System: Evercade family » Buy it for: £19.99 » Buy it from: Online, retail

This new Evercade cart is rather misleading, because while Atari now owns the ten included games, only two (*Fire Truck* and *Maze Invaders*) are original Atari titles, with the rest being created by Stern Electronics. This is an interesting cart, largely because it acts as an evolution of Stern's entertaining *Berzerk*. In addition to sequel *Frenzy*, *Tazz-Mania* and *Lost Tombs* highlight how Stern continued to evolve the *Berzerk* concept. *Moon War* and *Dark Planet* are OK top-down shooters, *Minefield* is a fun blaster, while *Rescue* is a watery take on *Choplifter*. It's not as varied as some Evercade carts, but the inclusion of *Maze Invaders* (a previously unreleased game by Ed Logg) adds to its overall value.

DARRAN JONES

>>

Score 76%



Croc: Legend Of The Gobbos

» System: PC (tested), Switch, PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X » Buy it for: £24.99 » Buy it from: Online

The resurrection of Argonaut Software has brought with it a remaster of *Croc*, and do you know what? It's pretty good fun. That's not to say it's not incredibly basic when placed next to today's platformers, but it's far more enjoyable than it was on release. This is mainly due to the new control scheme that makes *Croc* much easier to control than back in the day (don't worry, the old controls can still be used). There's a real quaintness to *Croc*'s look and simplistic level design that we've really clicked with, while the updated lighting and visuals also add to its charm. A pleasant surprise.

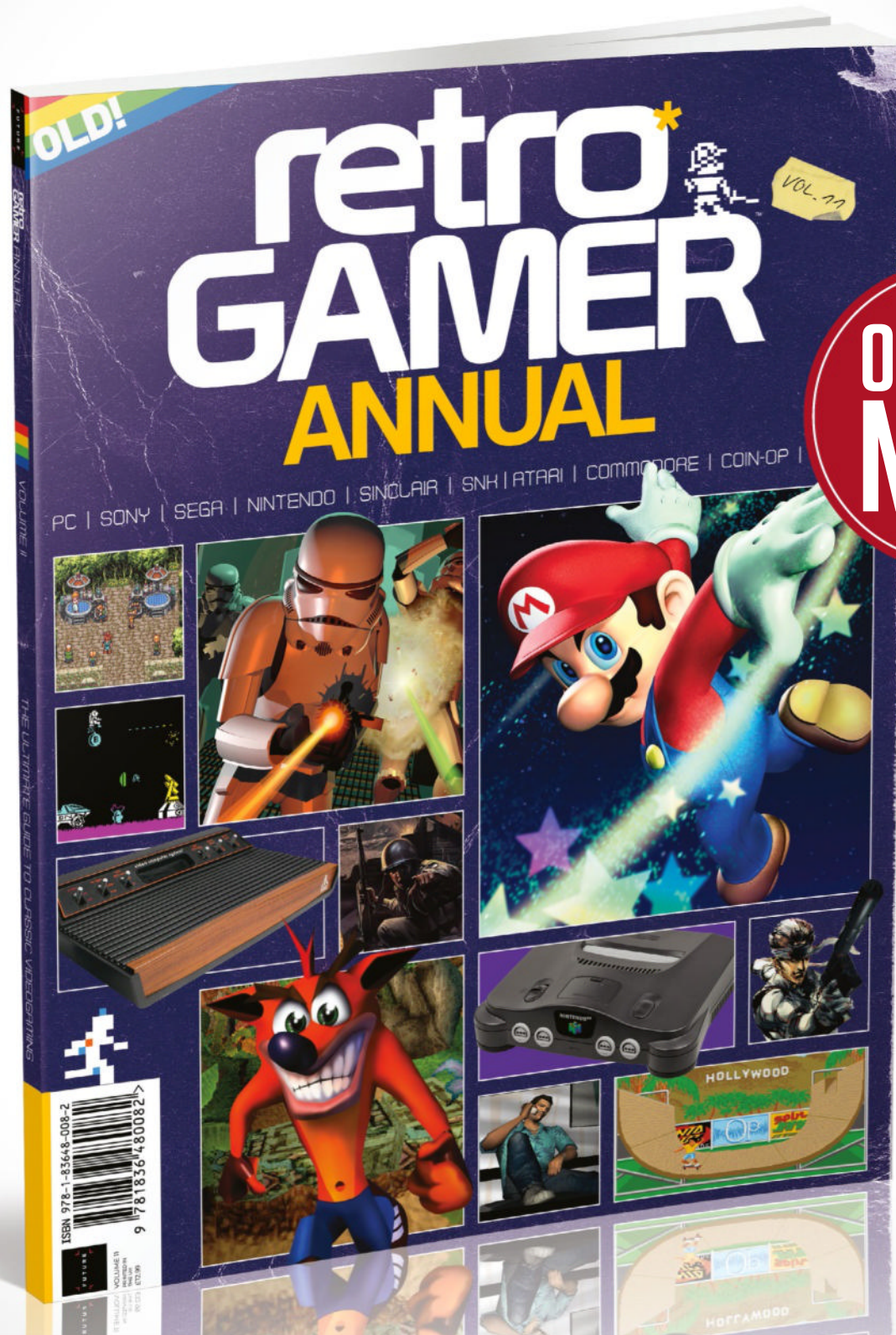
DARRAN JONES

>>

Score 72%

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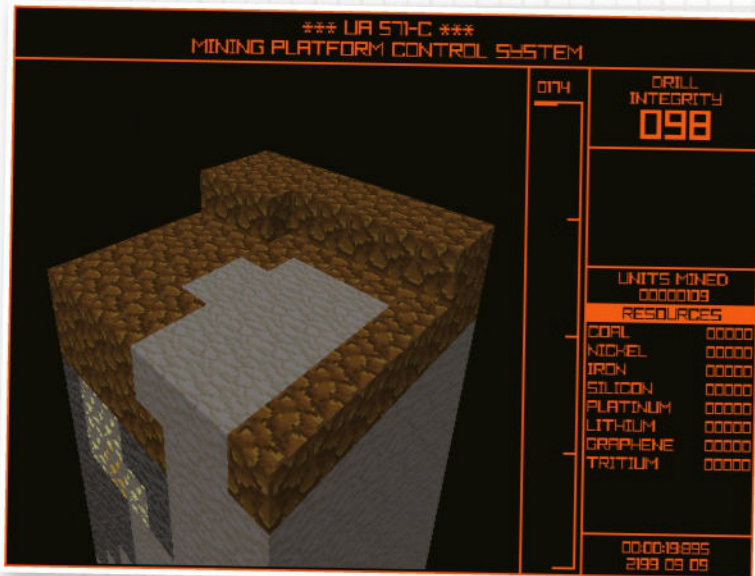
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Or get it from selected supermarkets & newsagents

THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE>



<!-- (DREAMCAST) CYPRESS WAS IMPRESSED BY THE "IDLER" GAME BIG DRILL FROM CAPTAIN KUSO, WHERE THE DRILL MINES RESOURCES TO BUY UPGRADES. -->



<!-- THE TOP 10 GAMES ON THE DISC MENU. -->

<INTRO> MANY GREAT COMPETITIONS AND GAME JAMS FINISHED RECENTLY, AND WE FEATURE THE HIGH-PROFILE DREAMCAST GAME JAM THIS TIME. WE ALSO WANT TO DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE RECENT NESMAKER JAM, BYTE OFF V - YOU CAN PLAY ALL THE ENTRIES ONLINE AT BIT.LY/BYTEOFFV. WE RECOMMEND TRYING THE AWESOME BACKWARDS QUEST AND THE SURPRISINGLY EMOTIONAL HOLD THE LIGHT. NEXT ISSUE, WE WILL BRING YOU COVERAGE OF THE BASIC 10-LINER COMPETITION.

</INTRO>

<MAIN HEADER>

DREAMING OF DREAMCAST

<INTRO> THE DREAM DISC '24 GAME JAM FOR DREAMCAST CREATORS WILL SEE THE BEST GAMES COMPILED INTO A PHYSICAL DISC </INTRO>

001 <BODY> It was envy that fuelled this latest
002 game jam, as developer Cypress reveals. "I was
003 jealous of the fact that the Saturn and Game Boy
004 scenes had popular game jams that got submissions
005 every year, and Dreamcast did not." He developed
006 his entry, *Murph's Big Puddle Fishing*, using, "A
007 combination of KallistiOS and Raylib. In the future, I'd
008 like to move to DreamScape by OrcFace or Simulant
009 Studio from Kazade."

010 Cypress is also hoping the jam becomes a regular
011 occurrence. "I'm actively developing a couple of tools
012 and games. One is for my Dream Disc '25 entry,
013 I'm still working on MintratVMU (a tool for making
014 VMU art and animations) and ChaoGen (a program
015 to generate and transfer Chao between *Sonic*
016 *Adventure* games); along with some tools to make
017 my entry easier to develop."

018 Publisher OrcFace Games and Ross Kilgariff are
019 creating the physical disc. "We want to bring more
020 games to the platform, and a game jam is a great way
021 to give developers experience working together with
022 us," Ross says. "Our game, *HarleQuest!* started as a
023 game jam project, so it's in our DNA. Our decision to
024 compile all the games into one disc and give it away
025 for the cost of shipping seemed like the best way
026 to get the developers' work into as many hands as
027 possible." The jam itself was hosted via itch.io. "Itch

028 gave us a simple way to allow developers to handle
029 their own submissions and have them listed on one
030 page," says Ross. "There are missing features that
031 would have really helped us, we are planning to build
032 our own solution for next time. Life can get in the
033 way, so we were half-expecting the developers to
034 drop out or be unable to finish their projects in time.
035 Instead, we got 24 very solid submissions from
036 people of different backgrounds and skill levels." The



<!-- DEVELOPER CYPRESS (LEFT), WHO CAME UP WITH THE GAME JAM, AND PUBLISHER ROSS KILGARIFF (RIGHT) OF ORCFACE GAMES. -->



<!-- (DREAMCAST) CROSSING TONY HAWK WITH A BIG TRUCK GIVES US TRICK TRUCK FROM WUFOSFT. -->



FAVOURITE FIVE



STARSHIP MADNESS (Yomboprime)

<This extremely impressive-looking 3D shooter by Yomboprime has a useful radar for locating enemies and multiple levels to conquer. />



BLACK HOLE DESCENT (Frogbull)

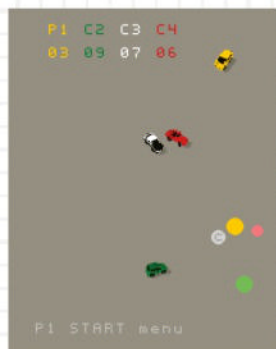
<Race along the endless highway at increasing speed, dodging the blocks in this polished game that offers different viewing angles. />

NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: retrogamer@futurenet.com



◀--- (DREAMCAST) TRACK DOWN THE STARS IN THE CURIOUS AND WELL-PRESENTED PUZZLE GAME ORDER OF TITAN. ---▶



◀--- (DREAMCAST) MATT SEPHTON'S DREAM RIDE FINISHED OUTSIDE THE TOP 10 BUT OFFERED SOME FRANTIC MULTIPLAYER ACTION. ---▶

037 judging panel chose their top ten games, and the
038 overall rankings were decided from those lists (see
039 the Favourite Five panel for the top five). The top
040 three earned cash prizes from the sponsor pool.
041 The menu system and artwork drew inspiration
042 from an interesting source. "We're going for
043 something inspired by Y2K futurism with logo design
044 elements from Verbatim's CD-R boxes, which I
045 always thought looked cool," says Ross. With the
046 release imminent, OrcFace have other projects
047 underway, starting with the recently published
048 Dreamcast conversion of NES hit *The Story of
049 Sword*. "Our biggest release this year is *HarleQuest!*
050 planned to release in Q3," Ross says. Before that,
051 we'll be releasing *Chew Chew Mimic*, inspired by
052 *Chu Chu Rocket* – developed by Lowtek Games and
053 Rigg'd Games (John Riggs). We may have something
054 exciting lined up for Q4 as well!" Download the jam
055 games from bit.ly/dreamdisc24 – the disc will be
056 available from orcface.com/store </BODY>

<INTRO> THE TOP 5 ENTRIES AS VOTED BY THE JUDGING PANEL </INTRO>



THE ETERNAL SLEEP (Locked Door Puzzle)

<This is a truly gorgeous adventure/puzzle game with pre-rendered backgrounds, arcane symbols and a distinct, brooding atmosphere. >>



DEFUSEBALL (Freakdave)

<Stretch your brain to the limits with this slick offering from Freakdave. Defuse the bombs in the right order in this challenging 3D puzzler. >>



SKY PIRATES OF ETALMAR (Wufsoft)

<The polished dogfighting game features two single-player scenarios and a split-screen Versus mode. It looks ripe for further development. >>

NEWSBYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

<Amiga: The vertically scrolling AGA shmup *Sky Shapers* is available as a download or physical CD. Swoop over to bit.ly/skyshapers >>

<Amstrad CPC: The Mojon Twins have released their latest, *Phantomas en el Museo*. Name your price at bit.ly/phantomas-museo >>

<Apple II: Richard Soberka released his 1987 game *Zephyr* for free. You'll find it by visiting soberka.com/games/ >>

<Atari ST: sark02's brilliant *Defender* conversion runs on all ST models with 1 MB memory. Get blasting at bit.ly/defender-st >>

<ColecoVision: Electric Dreams converted the strategy game *Hamurabi*. You'll find it over at bit.ly/hamurabi-coleco >>

<Game Boy: *Hero GP* is the latest from Shane McCafferty. Download it from bit.ly/herogp-gbc. Incube8 Games released demos of *Dracula Dark Reign* (GBC, see RG257) and unusual platformer *Discrete Orange* (GBA). There's more info at incube8games.com/ >>

<Mega Drive: Preorder a *Saboteur!* cartridge, ported by Teknamic at bit.ly/saboteur-md >>

<MSX2+: André Silva's *MSX Wings* is a demo based on the *Sonic Wings* series. You can play it online at bit.ly/wingsdemo-msx2 >>

<NES: *All Hell Unleashed* by 8-Bit Slasher pays tribute to classic 1980s horror movie villains. Discover it at bit.ly/ahu-nes >>

<N-Gage: Lowtek Games released the *Parasite Pack*, containing *Flea* and *Tapeworm Disco*. Grab it from bit.ly/parasite-ngage >>

<Pico-8: Check out Taxicomics' *Age Of Empires* demake, *Peak Of Empires* (bit.ly/ageofpico) and dhostin's *Warcraft III* demake (bit.ly/picocraft). They're both fun. >>

<Vic-20: Aleks Eeben's impressive *Ultima III* conversion requires 35K. You can experience it at bit.ly/ultima3-vic >>

<ZX81: John Connolly converted his Spectrum hit *Cosmic Playback* (requires 16K). Download it from bit.ly/cosmicpayback-zx81 >>

<ZX Spectrum: Allan Turvey released *Frogger RX* (bit.ly/froggerrx), while Bitmagine Studio converted the NES game *Driar*, which is at bit.ly/driar-zx >>

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CHAMPION CODER

CLAY LANCASTER

<INTRO> CHILDHOOD NINTENDO FAN AND MUSICIAN CLAY DISCOVERED NESMAKER, AND HAS BEEN MAKING NEW GAMES SINCE 2020 </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA WEBSITE: CALGAMES.US/ FORMAT: NES
PREVIOUS GAMES: JIM & DILL TRILOGY, BOBBY SIX SEVEN - TIME TRAVELLING DETECTIVE
WORKING ON: MISTER SCARY >

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE NES GAMES, CLAY?

During COVID, I was working on some music and thought it would be fun to make a simple browser-based game as a marketing tool. My research led me to NESmaker. I never thought I'd ever make my own NES game.

NESmaker and its built-in community have made this whole experience possible. It is designed to help folks who have little/no coding knowledge make something that works. The more you learn, and the more you dig into the guts, you'll find that you can accomplish whatever you want (within the limits of the console).

TELL US WHAT INSPIRED YOUR NEWEST GAME?

Mister Scary was inspired by possibly the dumbest/cutest thing ever. I was using my hand as a puppet to make my three-year-old daughter laugh, and she named him 'Mister Scary'. He likes snacks, and he likes to take naps. As far as gameplay, I



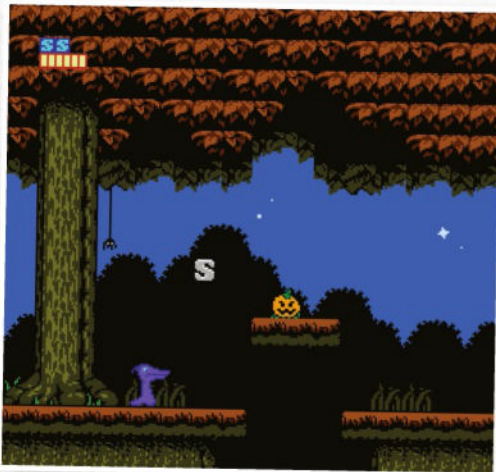
<!-- PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER AND MUSICIAN CLAY GREW UP WITH THE NES. -->

wanted to make something that felt child-like and weird, without being alienating. *Super Mario* games were great at that, especially in the early days. I was also influenced by *DuckTales* and *Mickey Mousecapade*, as both of those were childhood favourites of mine for their sense of adventure. The digital

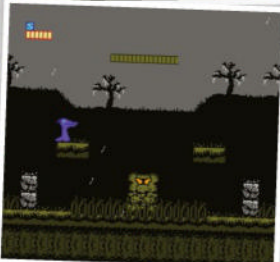
ROM will be available later this year on Itch, and physical NES copies will also be available... with a Kickstarter in July. Ideally, we'll bring this game to other platforms like the Switch and Steam. If anyone wants to help with that, give us a shout!

CAN YOU TELL US WHAT YOUR DREAM PROJECT WOULD BE?

I'd love to be involved in a top-down *Zelda* title. No references to older characters or older maps. Something as cute, crazy, and fresh as *Minish Cap* was. We named our daughter *Zelda*, so maybe that'll win me some resume points! Otherwise, I want to do a new *DuckTales* game. Not like the remake, just *DUCKTALES 3*. I was obsessed with that cartoon as a kid. >



<!-- [NES] MISTER SCARY'S JOURNEY STARTS IN THE FOREST. -->



DATA BURST

BOMB JACK EXTRA SUGAR EDITION



<INFO FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC (128K MEMORY NEEDED)
CREDITS: ANTHONY FLACK PRICE: NAME YOUR OWN PRICE
WEB: BIT.LY/BOMB-JACK-EXTRASUGAR >

<BODY> Tecmo's *Bomb Jack* is an arcade classic that sees the titular caped hero defusing bombs around the world.

Anthony Flack has produced an incredibly faithful new conversion using the Amstrad's Mode 1 (4-colour mode) and clever programming tricks. The gameplay remains the same: so you'll be collecting all the bombs on each screen, with a bonus for collecting them when their fuse is lit. While the P power-up and bonus coins appear as normal, it is the numerous enhancements that make this conversion worth playing. There are four different difficulty levels, and three main modes – the original 20 screens in Arcade mode, Remix mode with new backgrounds and an ending, and Scramble mode, which mixes up the levels. You can also choose Original, Reverse, or Random bomb order to make the game even more challenging. There are built-in cheats and Trophies to collect, with high scores saved to the disk. The graphics are superb, especially the new and recreated backgrounds of famous landmarks, and there is a palette change option for green-screen users. The music is excellent, and the sound is a perfect recreation, with the option to have both at the same time. Control is smooth and responsive, and the brief delay to load in the different backgrounds is worth it. This is by far the best 8-bit version of *Bomb Jack*, and an incredible debut by Anthony. </BODY>

SCORE:

90%



<!-- [AMSTRAD CPC] THE FAMILIAR GERMAN CASTLE WITH BOMBS HANGING IN THE AIR. -->

NEW GAMES NEEDED

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THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT



<!-- [NES] TAKING ON THE FIRST BOSS, A CUTE WITCH WHO FLIES AROUND AND FIRES AT YOU. --->



<!-- [NES] DEEP WITHIN CASTLE CREEPY ARE VAMPIRES AND ARMoured KNIGHTS. --->

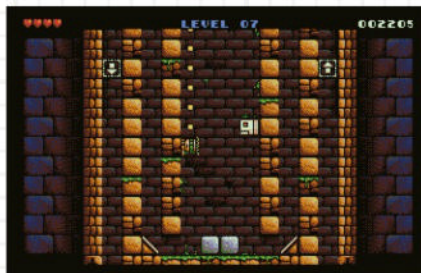
MISTER SCARY

<[INFO FORMAT: NES CREDITS: CALGAMES (CLAY LANCASTER - DESIGN, GRAPHICS, CODING; LOGAN E. SCHAD AND KEVIN VAN DER BURG - SOUNDTRACK) PRICE: KICKSTARTER LAUNCHING IN JULY WEB: [BIT.LY/MISTERSCARY-NES](http://bit.ly/misterscary-nes) />

<[BODY] Purple monster Mister Scary has lost his family and must explore six scary stages to find them. Starting in the Creepy Forest, he can jump on most enemies' heads; a chilli gives a fire breath attack, and an ice cube lets you freeze enemies. Mister Scary can also duck to temporarily avoid damage. Waiting at the end of each level is a boss whose large energy bar must be drained. The unusual main hero and the comic creatures move well, and the varied soundtrack adds tremendously to the overall atmosphere. The best parts of the game are the unusual funhouse maze and clever boss fights, but it is tough going. Platforming fans will find this enjoyable rather than scary. </BODY>

SCORE:

80%



<!-- [ATARI JAGUAR] MIRRORS WILL CHANGE YOUR MOVEMENT, WHILE ARROWS ONLY PERMIT MOVEMENT IN THE DIRECTION THEY POINT. --->



<!-- [ATARI JAGUAR] ALSO IN THE JAGUAR VERSION IS THE ABILITY TO LOOK UP AND DOWN FROM YOUR CURRENT POSITION. --->

OLD TOWERS

<[INFO FORMAT: JAGUAR CREDITS: LAWRENCE STAVELEY (REBOOT GAMES) PRICE: PHYSICAL PRE-ORDER \$79.95 WEB: [BIT.LY/OLDTOWERS-JAGUAR](http://bit.ly/oldtowers-jaguar) />

<[BODY] Andy Noble's ST conversion (bit.ly/oldtowers_st) was the basis for this latest Retro Souls port. To complete each of the 30 taxing levels, collect all the coins while avoiding spikes, bats, and other hazards. Your character keeps moving until they hit something solid, with some walls collapsing when touched and others appearing when you pass through. Later levels have two characters to switch between, there's a new Turbo Mode, and the cartridge saves your high scores. Well-made graphics and an excellent soundtrack (including synth classic *Popcorn*) make this a good Jaguar conversion. </BODY>

SCORE:

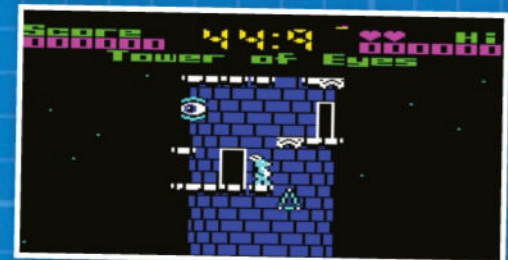
83%

PROCESSING

<[INTRO] SNUGGSY IS MIXING CHUCKIE EGG WITH NEBULUS TO CREATE A BBC AND ELECTRON MASTERPIECE CALLED CHUCKULUS </INTRO>

<[BODY] When it comes to coding, Snuggsy calls himself old school. "I'm developing my code in Notepad++, the sprites/artwork in Aseprite, and compiling in 0xc0de's Max64. Disk and tape images are done with Gerald Holdsworth's Disk Image Manager." So what inspired him to create *Chuckulus*? "I was looking at C64 *Nebulus* and thought I'd see how far I could get with an Electron version. Someone mentioned *Chuckie Egg* on BlueSky, so I did a version with the *Chuckie Egg* sprites. I converted my code to give a more *Chuckie Egg* playing experience, and here we are!"

It's not been without challenges, though. "I struggled to remember some of the BBC Micro's Interrupt methods (which I hadn't used for some years). Hardware platform is detected at runtime, and appropriate patches are made to the code." Initially, it will be a download only release, but he hasn't ruled out a physical release. "I still have to do some Harry and Duck movement refinement, enemy collision detection, BBC sound, and level design. Memory left will go towards a high-score table and possibly an attract mode." </BODY>



<!-- [ELECTRON] THIS EARLY PREVIEW OF NEBULUS ON THE ELECTRON BECAME SOMETHING DIFFERENT WITH THE ADDITION OF HENHOUSE HARRY... --->



HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES

DOOM MEMORIES

The team recall their first encounter with id Software's masterpiece



DARRAN JONES



NICK THORPE



TIM EMPEY

Doom: *The Dark Ages* is now out and we've got an earlier game on our cover, so it feels like the perfect time to revisit id Software's seminal first-person shooter. Tim, Nick and Darran recall their experiences with the series.

DARRAN

What was your first experience with the original *Doom*?

NICK

It must have been at a PC-owning friend's house, but I'm not sure who it would have been. What I do know for sure is that I was 'too young' to be seeing it.

TIM

I first played *Doom* on a friend's PC, it was a significant step up from *Wolfenstein 3D* which I'd sneakily played in college when I should have been learning how to program in Fortran and Pascal of all things.

DARRAN

Mine was seeing it on Mark Catterall's 486 and I thought it was astonishing. What was the first system you played *Doom* on and did it live up to the hype?

NICK

It would have been the PC for me, and it was incredible there. The first system I actually owned it on was the Saturn, and that version was super disappointing because it chugs so badly.

TIM

The PlayStation version for me, I must've hired it from the video shop. Weirdly, I did play *Doom II* on the same mate's PC before *Doom* on the PlayStation. Yeah, *Doom II* was better.

DARRAN

I skipped the SNES version as I didn't like how it ran. My brother had the PlayStation version on release and it was ace, and I've since picked up

the Japanese import. Why do we think the original *Doom* appears on so many different systems and consoles?

TIM

It's just a very popular game, and I guess it's become a bit of a meme now, "Play *Doom* on your calculator! Play *Doom* on your flipping fridge!"

NICK

Yeah, it was in demand in the early days, and then as Tim says, it turned into a meme. I actually ended up getting a bit of attention when I ran *Doom* on a Pocket CHIP for our old sister magazine *Gadget*.

DARRAN

Amazingly, the latest Limited Run Games set of *Doom + Doom II* has a box that plays *Doom*! You'll need to drop \$666 to enjoy it though. What did people think of *Doom II*? I liked it, but felt it was quite similar to the original.



» [Sega 32X] Few shotgun animations are as satisfying to watch as *Doom's*.

TIM

I loved *Doom II*, especially when I found out about no-clip mode, that made everything so much easier – just dashing through walls to the end of the levels!

NICK

Funnily enough, I only ever played *Doom II* in multiplayer so it always feels distinct from the original to me. Of course, that was when I'd finally got a PC so it would have been around 2002 or 2003, and by that point it already felt a bit retro.

DARRAN

Doom 3 is one of the game's that I've started playing loads of times, but never completed. My PC couldn't play it on release, but it's readily available now. Has anyone else got much experience with it?



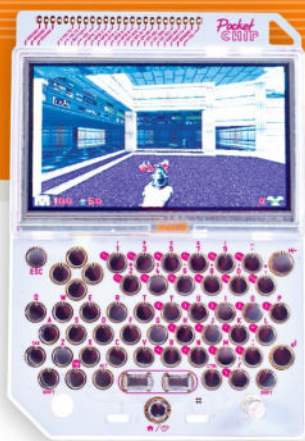
» [PC] It's a pity Nick can't play *Doom: The Dark Ages* as he'd love the *Panzer Dragoon*-style flying bits it has.



» [Nintendo 64] Darran passed on *Doom 64* on its release, due to thinking it was just the PC game. Silly Darran.



» [PlayStation 3] Amazingly, none of the team has completed *Doom 3* yet.



» Nick managed to get the original *Doom* running on the Pockit CHIP.

TIM

I only played it recently – there was a collection that came up on Game Pass. Though I do remember the disappointment in the office when the original came out in 2004. Which was then echoed in me after I got about half-way through it and stopped playing. I very much doubt I'll go back to it.

NICK

I never played it, as I'd started to experience motion sickness by that point. To be honest though, I didn't love the horror direction they went in – to me, *Doom* always felt like it was supposed to be about blowing holes in baddies to metal tunes, not creeping along dark corridors with a torch.

DARRAN

See, I actually like that aspect of it, Nick. Before we move on, I'll also give a big shout out to *Doom 64*. I completed it on the Nintendo 64 a while back and it's fantastic. Did anyone play the RPGs? They were good fun.

NICK

I didn't. In fact, I think the last *Doom* I played was the board game, based on the 2016 reboot. Good fun, I didn't vomit, 9/10.

TIM

Nope, not played the RPGs, but I played the shit out of the reboot and *Doom Eternal*. And I am very jealous that you've got review code for *The Dark Ages*, Darran. *Doom Eternal* is such a mad rush of ripping and tearing, and I'm hoping for more of the same with *The Dark Ages*.



» [PC] All the team remember the impact *Doom* had on them when they first witnessed it.

“My brother had the PlayStation version on release and it was ace”

DARRAN JONES



» [PC] Id Software's reboot of *Doom* is tremendous fun. *Doom Eternal* is equally enjoyable.

DARRAN

I did love how well it captured the spirit of the original game and how vicious it feels to play. It's got a really impressive Switch port too. I've not played too much of *Doom Eternal*, but *Doom: The Dark Ages* is really good. You should play it, Tim.

TIM

Heh, I'll probably have finished it by the time this issue is out. ✨



» [PC] Tim greatly enjoyed *Doom II*, although Darran wasn't too keen on it.

READERS REACT

What are your first memories of playing the original *Doom*?

Adam

I just remember it being so atmospheric. The music was great, the grizzly noises and the way Doomguy's eyes would move really set the scene.

Simon Burton

Playing it at work on the late shift at the time, to 'test out' our new PC's graphics capabilities.

Jonny

Christmas 1996. *Doom* on the PlayStation. I played it for three days straight. The sounds, music and gameplay captured me immediately. Nothing since has come close.

Gary Alexander Stott

Da dun da dun da dun da dun da dun. Da dun da dun da dun da duuuuuuuuuun.

Murray Lane

Playing it on the Sega 32X – even the cut-down version seemed amazing at the time.

Tikanjiah

My favourite *Doom* memory is trying to get the game and modem settings to connect to my friend's computer for about three to four hours until we finally got it working. Then hoping the modem noise doesn't wake up my parents at night while we try to sneak in a match before bed.

AndyGenX

I remember the first time I played *Doom* – it was at my friend's house. His dad had a work PC running DOS that could handle it. I was blown away. It felt like next-level gaming, like something from another world. I honestly thought I'd never be able to afford the kind of setup needed to run it myself.

PT88

Firing the shotgun for the first time and how satisfying it was blasting away the bad guys.

Agent Prince

Seeing it on the SNES for the first time. Amazing achievement.

Shaddmain

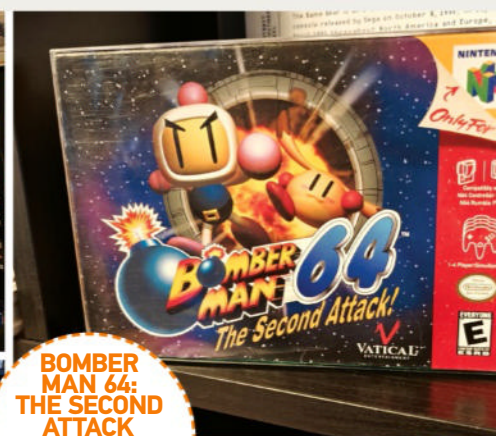
I've never played a *Doom* game despite playing games for 20 plus years. Truly, a cardinal sin, I know. The upcoming *Doom: The Dark Ages* will be my first one.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH THE RETRO KEYHOLE



SONIC COMPILATION
"This was a birthday gift from my parents that I received on my fourth birthday."
AMOUNT PAID: GIFT



BOMBERMAN 64: THE SECOND ATTACK
"A Christmas present from a dear friend of mine."
AMOUNT PAID: GIFT



BIO

NAME:
Theresa Michelle Ridgway (Game Mistress)

LOCATION:
Norway

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
About £100,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEM:
Mega Drive

FAVOURITE GAME:
Sonic 3 & Knuckles

SOCIAL MEDIA:
twitch.tv/gamemistress

SEGA FOREVER

Meet the Game Mistress and her Sega-focussed collection

Theresa Ridgway (aka Game Mistress) is a retro streamer who hails from Norway and still holds a passion for Sega that began when she was very young. "It started when I was about two years old and sitting in the living room with my mother," she begins. "I noticed my sister's NES and I started to press the power button while holding the controller until my mother asked if I wanted to play. We began playing *Metroid*, and I had a lot of fun. Later, she put on *Zelda 2*, and I played my sister's completed save file."

This introduction to gaming began to turn into a passion that would lead Theresa to her beloved Sega. "When I turned three, my parents gave me a Mega Drive for Christmas. However, at first, I wasn't impressed with the games," she explains. That all changed when Theresa got a copy of *Sonic Compilation*. "I was already a huge fan of Sonic since I watched the cartoons on TV. But playing the games got me hooked, the music, the gameplay, just everything about the [Mega Drive] felt superior to what I'd played before."

Theresa also liked how different the Mega Drive games were from Nintendo's offerings. "Sega had some challenging games, especially from the likes of Treasure," she continues. "I also fell in love with Sega's unique characters like Ristar, Alien Soldier and Dynamite Headdy. But *Sonic 3 & Knuckles* took the gameplay to a whole new level, especially with the lock-on cartridge." This love for Sega continued into the Dreamcast era. "When the Dreamcast came out, it felt non-existent in Norway. However, my sister's ex-husband worked for Funcom, and he lent one to me. I remember getting blown away by *Sonic Adventure 2* and its high-energy rock-style music."

Theresa has since built an impressive Sega collection, but what items would she like to add? "I would love to add *Pulseman*, it has an insane story, fast gameplay and you can switch between two worlds. Also, I'd like to add *MUSHA* as I'm a sucker for mechs and shooters." Theresa also comments on the current high prices for retro games. "I find the prices annoying

because not all retro games are available digitally. It feels like retro gaming has become part of the elite, which I feel is wrong. Retro games should be enjoyed by everyone! Of course, there is emulation, but nothing beats original hardware."

Theresa is a popular retro streamer on Twitch, and we ask her what she enjoys about it. "I love the fact that I can share my love and passion for retro games with my community. Together, we take a journey through our childhoods and educate the younger generation on why retro games are awesome." Finally, we ask Theresa why she feels retro gaming is so popular today. "I think it has to do with the lockdown, it was around then that there was a huge explosion of content creators and retro gamers coming together. We connected our old devices to escape the sad reality and reawakened our past to feel some happiness from our childhoods. I also feel there has been a return to other things, such as fashion and music from the Eighties and Nineties, which are getting popular again." ★

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

f RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@futurenet.com retrogamer.bsky.social

ALIEN SOLDIER

"My mother felt bad that she was working late as a private English teacher, so one day she came home with this game as an apology."

AMOUNT PAID: 10 Dmark (old German currency)

BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

DOOM

You'd be forgiven for thinking a game as popular as the original *Doom* wouldn't cost a trip to Mars, but to find the big box version is difficult these days. Expect to pay over **£150** for a decent copy with floppy disks and a manual.



MUSHA ALESTE

Shooters always tend to be expensive, and this Mega Drive classic is no different. Complete Japanese copies blast over **£150**, while a loose cart can fetch over **£75**.

STARGLIDER

While there are several copies always available, a complete copy of Rainbird's classic on the Amstrad CPC will cost more than your pocket money in 2025. Expect to pay over **£100**.



BREATH OF FIRE III

Capcom's PlayStation RPG is still collectable, as good condition copies cost over **£80**. Those wanting to save money can opt for the cheaper Japanese version that can cost as little as **£20**, although you'll need to understand Japanese.

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

A basic copy of Sega's lightgun classic on the Wii can cost as little as **£3**. If you want the complete set that included the Wiimote gun attachments, you'll be looking at over **£40**.



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

While the cost of hiring a real hitman requires lots of money, purchasing this wonderful stealth title on PC will only set you back **£3** for a complete copy.

750CC GRAND PRIX

Codemasters' Amstrad and Spectrum *Super Bike* title can be purchased for as little as **£5** for a copy that wouldn't make it out of the pits, with pole position copies about **£10**.



CASTLE OF ILLUSION: STARRING MICKEY MOUSE

Mickey's brilliant outing is still one of the Mega Drive's best platformers. Good condition complete PAL copies go for about **£20**, with loose carts costing less than **£10**.



SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SUMMONER: RAIDOU KUZUNOHA VS THE SOULLESS ARMY

You'll need to sell your soul to summon one of these into your PS2 collection; complete copies cost over **£90**. The Japanese version is much cheaper at **£20**, but you'll need a knowledge of Japanese.



HOW MUCH?!

GBA SP THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP LIMITED EDITION

Zelda titles usually hold their value, and this *Minish Cap* collectors' set sold for over **£5,500** in a recent online auction. It does include a cool T-shirt, though.



Prices correct at time of print

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

PANZER DRAGON SAGA

"My community was incredibly kind, donating so I could purchase this. The game broke due to a shop messing up the resurfacing, then another community member sold me their copy."

PAID: £550



MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR SHARED PASSION

THE GENERATION GAME

Are you suffering the dreaded Switch 2 FOMO? Nick isn't, and here's why



here's a good chance that many of you put off reading this issue

of Retro Gamer, because it went on sale on the same day as the Nintendo Switch 2. Who can resist the allure of a shiny new console? Plenty of people, as it turns out. I watched the chaos unfolding on BlueSky as preorders opened, and while many eager customers secured hardware, a significant number were unable to do so. Me? I didn't even try. The hardware price was in line with what I expected, but the prospect of paying £75 for a physical copy of *Mario Kart World* caught me off guard. If it's not within your price range, I sympathise entirely.

The cost of the new system is something that Nintendo Of America president Doug Bowser tried to address in a statement to Canada's CBC. "We recognise there are some people that may not be able to afford [the Switch 2's] price point," said Bowser. "That's why we wanted to make the other Switch platforms available, so [people] still have an opportunity to come into our gaming universe, be a part of these characters in these worlds, and see value, if you will, in whatever rung of the platform they come in." The online backlash was swift and vicious, with plenty of commentators drawing parallels to Don Mattrick's suggestion that players without an internet connection should buy the Xbox 360 instead of an Xbox One, back in 2013. But I couldn't get on board with the anger, because it struck me that the concept that had

enraged so many gamers used to just be normal product strategy.

I should know, too – I spent most of my childhood enjoying consoles that had stuck around the market as budget alternatives to the latest technology. Regular readers will know that I got my Master System II in 1992, as it was the best that my mum could afford, and I cherished the machine that allowed me to play *Sonic* at home. I finally took a step up to the Mega Drive in the summer of 1997, which served as my primary console for a year and a half until I got a PlayStation around Christmas of 1998. The system was already four years old by that point, but you can likely imagine how thrilled I was to finally catch up to the top end of the console market.

The truth is that by the time I got my PlayStation, I had become desperate

for a new console. The move to 3D was a paradigm shift, one that my 16-bit machine was just incapable of adjusting to unless I decided to pick up the dead-end 32X – and my desperation meant that I was tempted on more than one occasion. Before that though, I didn't really feel particularly left out. My dad's Mega Drive was clearly more capable than the Master System I had, but the efforts of developers meant that I still got to play games that I'd

first encountered at his place. Even when Sega opted not to try directly converting games like *Sonic 2* from the Mega Drive, the alternatives we got were worthwhile.

People who hold on to older hardware these days face

"The online backlash was swift and vicious"
NICK THORPE

DON'T LET GO

REASONS TO CLING TO YOUR AGEING HARDWARE

CROSS-GEN DEVELOPMENT

A large number of new releases are still coming out for the PS4, Xbox One and Switch, despite their age.

YOUR BACKLOG

Tell us the truth, though – have you even finished all of the games you've bought for your existing console?

BETTER LIBRARY

Some consoles have great early days, but plenty don't. Waiting can help you avoid barren early release schedules.

INEVITABLE UPGRADES

New hardware often comes with flaws. Why not wait for a revised version that fixes the issues early adopters faced?

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The planet could probably do with us slowing down the pace with which we replace our technology.

a situation much closer to the Master System experience. The PlayStation 5 reached its fourth birthday on 12 November 2024, but of the ten best games I played last year, I only actually *needed* it for *Tekken 8*. Admittedly, I haven't yet played *Astro Bot*, but what of the other nine? One is a VR game that I played on the Meta Quest 2 rather than the latest Quest 3, two are PC exclusives with relatively low minimum specs, and six are perfectly playable on the PS4. There are 150 million Switch consoles out there so the format isn't likely to fade away soon, and big releases like *Metroid Prime 4: Beyond* and *Pokémon Legends Z-A* are already confirmed.

One thing I can confidently say is that I don't think your kids will hold it against you if you wait to buy that shiny new machine, because so many of your stories resembled my experience of growing up with older hardware and having a great time.

Many of us have struggled with the cost of living, but existing hardware is still adequate for so many games. So I'm happy to stick with my older machines – and while it may anger some people, I support any company encouraging us to do so. ★

[MASTER SYSTEM] I WAS INTRODUCED TO DESERT STRIKE ON THE MEGA DRIVE, BUT THE 8-BIT EDITION WAS EXCELLENT TOO.



[SWITCH] YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MISS OUT ON THE LATEST METROID PRIME IF YOU STICK WITH YOUR SWITCH.



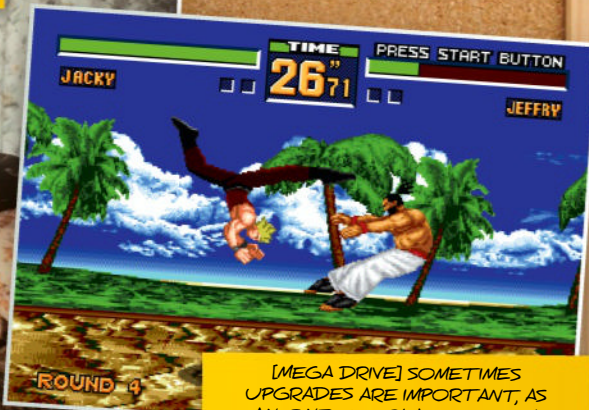
I BOUGHT THE ORIGINAL SWITCH ON DAY ONE, AND HAD FULLY INTENDED TO DO THE SAME FOR ITS SUCCESSOR.



[PLAYSTATION 5] I LIKED SONIC X SHADOW GENERATIONS, BUT I LIKED IT WITH A LOWER FRAME RATE ON PS4 TOO.



DO YOU THINK MY GRIN WOULD HAVE BEEN ANY WIDER FOR THE MEGA DRIVE VERSION? I DON'T.



[MEGA DRIVE] SOMETIMES UPGRADES ARE IMPORTANT, AS ANYONE WHO PLAYED VIRTUA FIGHTER 2'S 16-BIT CONVERSION CAN ATTEST.

[SWITCH] FIRST-PARTY SWITCH 2 LAUNCH GAMES ARE SCARCE, HENCE THE UPGRADED VERSION OF BREATH OF THE WILD.



[MASTER SYSTEM] ADMITTEDLY, SOME MASTER SYSTEM CONVERSIONS WEREN'T SO HOT COMPARED TO THEIR 16-BIT COUNTERPARTS, LIKE STRIDER.



[SWITCH 2] MARIO KART WORLD IS LIKELY TO BE VERY GOOD, BUT £75 IS JUST AN AWFUL LOT OF MONEY.



LEFT BEHIND?

Readers share their experiences of gaming with a generation gap

Joel J Games

I got my very first console the Master System, with *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* built in and a copy of *Sonic 1* for (the best ever) Christmas while the Mega Drive was already long out. I loved it but it was frustrating getting *Mean Machines* only to have 1-2 SMS reviews and left to drool over all the MD titles.

Nick Wilson

In 1995 my parents bought me for Christmas a Mega Drive with *Sonic 1* and 2, *Altered Beast* and *Quackshot*. Also an OG Game Boy with ten games. A little ten-year-old Nick was so happy. I didn't even know the PlayStation existed until 1998 when I bought one with my paper round money.

Gavin Andrews

I received a SNES when the PlayStation came out. I ended up discovering *Zelda*, *Mario Kart* and *Killer Instinct* and never wanted to part with it.

Cherry Lambrini

There was nothing I wanted more than a NES when I was a kid. I never got one, but I did get an Acorn Electron when I was about six, which had some absolute belters with it. *Repton 1* and 2, *Felix And The Evil Weevils*, *Football Manager*, loads more. Great games.

Maxwell Lamb

I had a C64 that was gifted to me in about 1990, and as far as I was concerned, it was incredible. It helped that I wasn't allowed to watch TV, didn't get online until at least '94, and school only had BBC Micros. I was oblivious to the existence of anything better.

John McKee

I remember in the days of the Mega Drive, I was still rocking the ZX Spectrum. The 48K version. Days of buying games and looking at the screenshots on the back, and thinking, "You lying bastards!" with all the full-colour screenshots. I'm thinking especially of *RoboCop* here!

Shredditz

The Sega Genesis carried me all the way through the Nintendo 64/PS1/Sega Saturn era.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – [TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG](https://twitter.com/RETROGAMER_MAG)

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a copy of one of our classic retro books from our archives. Good luck everyone!



» [GameCube] Henry would love for *Twilight Princess* to appear on the Switch 2's GameCube service.

★ STAR LETTER DON'T EVER STOP

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I just wanted to write in to say how much I enjoyed the recent ZX Spectrum feature. I've been buying **Retro Gamer** since it was released and I'm always amazed at how you find new and interesting ways to cover beloved games and systems. I found the piece on colour clash fascinating to read and it was great to see the games of the late Don Priestley were mentioned. In fact, issue 272 was a bit of a classic in general, as I also loved the Denton Designs article, the piece on *Gauntlet IV* and the Tomonobu Itagaki interview. I've been getting **Retro Gamer** for 20 years now and it remains an essential read each month, with new articles like Magazine Craft and Music Memories really hitting home for me. Keep up the fantastic work,

Barry James

Thanks for the kind words, Barry. We do our best to keep articles fresh and exciting and to introduce new features and it's great to see it paying off with readers.



» It's great to hear that new features like Music Memories are being enjoyed. We've got another new feature for you in this issue.

WHERE'S ZELDA?

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

Following on from the Hot Topic in issue 272 about the GameCube coming to the Switch 2, I was pretty surprised no one mentioned *Twilight Princess*. It's a great Zelda game, and despite coming out late on in the GameCube's life, I think it deserves a spot in the Switch 2's catalogue. Mannnn, people have been waiting for a supposed remake for ages. It would be great to have it portable too, and as Darran said, I was also surprised that the GameCube wasn't included on the first Switch! All the best,

Henry Matthews

We're sure *Twilight Princess* will appear on the new GameCube service, Henry. Unless of course that long-rumoured remake finally happens. Fingers crossed.

UNRAVELLING THE CODE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

As a long-time and happy subscriber of **Retro Gamer**, I was excited to read the extended article on the Spectrum in issue 272. Though I understand that the article was focussing on the technical challenges our favourite bedroom coders had to overcome to bring their now legendary compositions

to the limited little slab, in places it was incomprehensible to a lay retro fan. Talk of rasters, binary XOR logic gates and the explanation of colour clash made the article feel like it was written for a very limited audience. All of this made it feel a little dry and out of place in a mag that I see as a celebration of our nostalgia for these old boxes of delight. Maybe these types of articles could somehow break down what seems like inside baseball for coders to be understood by the rest of us. Other than that, **Retro Gamer** is still the best place to read about our shared hobby and relive childhood memories. Keep up the great work!

Marc Livingstone

Thanks for writing in Marc and thanks for the feedback. We generally only do one of these for each system, so you can expect the next Spectrum feature to be far more focussed on games rather than tech.

A NEW OBSESSION

Hi **Retro Gamer**,

I just wanted to say a huge thank you for the ZX Spectrum article in the latest issue of **Retro Gamer**. I've recently developed a bit of an obsession with it, I'm currently trying to get my hands on one and making some unholy attempts at creating my own games. Your article made me even more



» There's been divided opinion on our recent Spectrum piece. What did you think of it?

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates



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» Nick's Master System feature has convinced plenty of readers to start collecting for it.

excited to dive into the Speccy rabbit hole. Thanks again for fuelling my retro-gaming fixation! Cheers,
Grace

Thanks for the kind words, Grace. If you do end up creating a game, be sure to submit it to Andrew Fisher so we can take a look at it.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

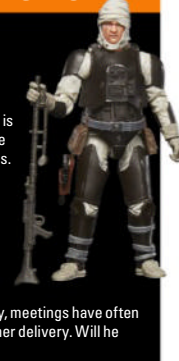
Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I just wanted to say a big thank you for the Sega Master System article in April's issue. Whilst it may have triggered interest in collectors and people remembering their Sega days/youth, it did actually trigger a different memory for me – one of unfinished business!

Around 1989/1990 I was tired of my Spectrum and was ready to move on to the next thing. What blew me away was playing the Master System round my friend's house one day. He had *Double Dragon*, *California Games*, *Wonder Boy*, *Secret Command* and many others. I was immediately hooked and spent the next few months obsessing/begging for a Master System, and also spent many evenings poring over one of those pamphlets that came free with the machine that listed all the games and peripherals like the 3-D Glasses and lightgun. I never actually got a Master System, and for Christmas 1990 I got a Nintendo and firmly became a 'Nintendo Kid' and never looked back, moving on to SNES, Game Boy, N64, Wii, Wii U and

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

The Black Series

The team will never not be fascinated with Darran's constant need to collect things. His latest obsession is Hasbro's Black Series range of six-inch *Star Wars* figures. Initially he planned to buy a couple of figures as he's always wanted to own the original line-up of bounty hunters from *The Empire Strikes Back*, but Darran being Darran, it quickly got out of hand. Needless to say, meetings have often been disrupted by yet another delivery. Will he ever learn? [Unlikely – Ed]



so on. Reading the article really triggered that pure nostalgia feeling of a time long ago and a memory of pure obsession that I don't really think you get anymore when you're an adult. Anyway, I just wanted to say you have now inspired me to begin the arduous task of starting a Master System collection! Keep up the good work as always on an excellent magazine, and thanks to you all again.
Best regards,
Andrew Ricks

You're one of many people who enjoyed the Master System article, Andrew. Maybe you'll find the Game Gear piece in this issue of interest as well.

Your say

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's the best weapon or power-up in the Doom series?

RetroGamingVibez

The Super Shotgun, no question. It's loud, messy, and turns demons into red mist.

Gabe Rohling

The BFG9000. It made quick work of anything and everything.

Jeremy Peel

The Chaingun, cos of the way it perpetually interrupts a Cacodemon, leaving them floundering in midair. Exquisite.

Psi/Ben

It has to be the Super Shotgun, even alongside crazier weapons like Plasma Rifles and the BFG, the Super Shotgun is still the most iconic. The feel. Those sounds!

The Top Loader

The double-barrel shotgun (or Super Shotgun) is the answer you are looking for. Simple and nothing fancy but the most satisfying gun in ANY game.

Yucan

The chainsaw. Doesn't matter if it's *Doom II*, *3*, *2016*, or *Eternal*, it's always amazing.

Robert August de Meijer

The chainsaw feels good to use, is properly balanced, and is a real horror show badass!

Jason

The Plasma Rifle. Big blue blobs of destruction with a satisfying meaty death.

» [PC] Getting ready to use the Chaingun on a pair of Cacodemons.



Robb from 8/16/32bit

The Super Shotgun. It just feels so substantial. And it's fun to go on a rampage with it.

Marc Chaggar

I've always been rather fond of the Plasma Rifle. I love the noise and feeling of melting your enemies.

John Maguire

No weapon. I like to get punchy! Ha ha!

retro GAMER

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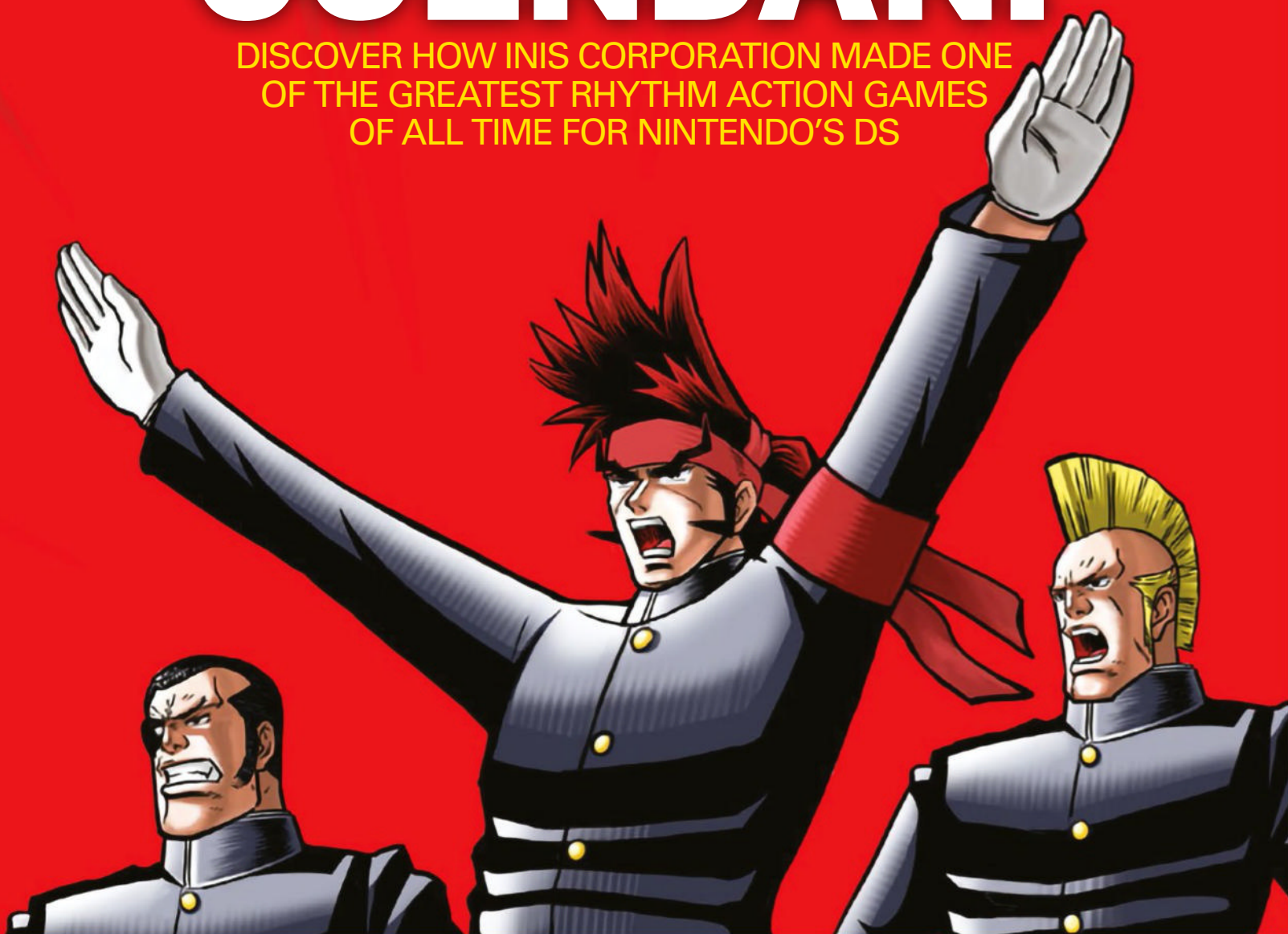
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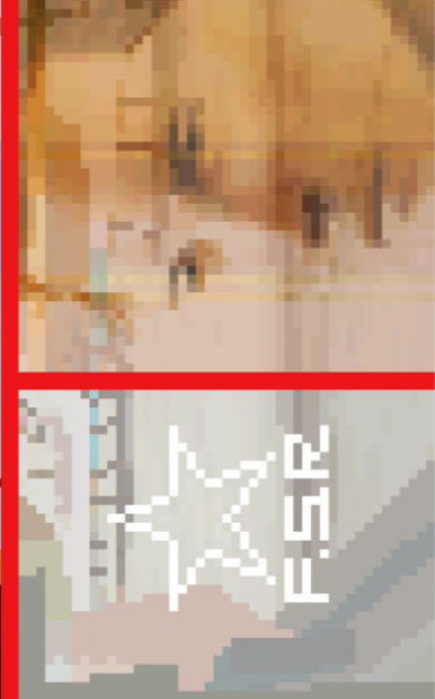


AND MUCH MORE, INCLUDING...

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Covermount Corner, WonderSwan Crystal, Demon Ware, The Orange Box,
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I am asking the
questions, you petulant
child!



FSR

000000 676

THE LOS RAIN

Flower, Sun, And Rain

TROPICAL TURMOIL



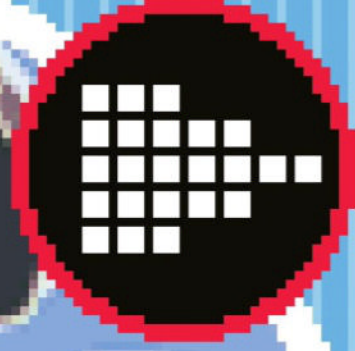
» DS » 2008 » GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
One of the things I love about the DS
was how it emboldened publishers.

With so many units out there and such broad demographics to cater to, software companies started to take chances on games that would have struggled to get an English release in years gone by – and this adventure from Goichi Suda (Suda51, to his friends) stands as a beneficiary, as the original PS2 version was only released in Japan. It's one of my personal favourites from the DS library, but it's not necessarily a game I recommend to everyone.

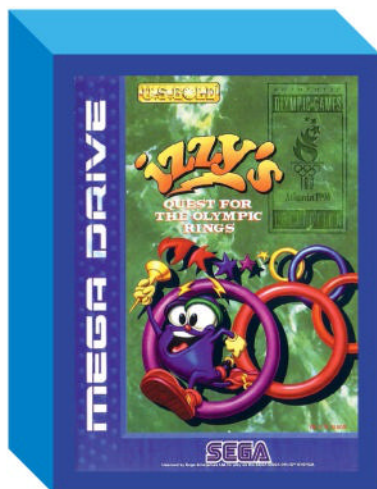
Flower, Sun, And Rain puts you in the role of Sumio Mondo, who is tasked with defusing a bomb on a plane leaving Lospass Island, only to find himself in a time loop at the titular hotel. It's a game that is kind of off-putting in a strange, passive way. While the look of the game is supposed to be rather stylised, the low-resolution textures often make it look rather ugly. Many of the characters you meet have a definite low-level hostility about them and the puzzles, which involve deducing specific numerical codes needed to progress, can be fairly obtuse. If you'd be annoyed by having to put off dealing with the terrorist threat because there's a wrestler training in the hotel stairwell, this probably isn't the game for you. (I see why you like it – Ed)

But the game is so odd that I find it unforgettable. I do find the writing enjoyable, and Masafumi Takada's arrangements of classical music still pop into my head from time to time. Just one look at the hotel manager Edo Macalister is enough to remind me of a particular moment, where his professional courtesy slips. That's before we even get to the pink crocodile. *Flower, Sun, And Rain* isn't a technical masterpiece, nor is it necessarily a crowd-pleaser, but it is distinctive – and when you've played hundreds of games, something a little different goes a long way. ✨

» RETROREVIEW



ENDGAME



IZZY'S QUEST FOR THE OLYMPIC RINGS

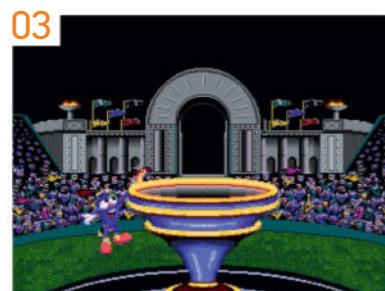
» Being an Olympic mascot has to be pretty rubbish, when you think about it. Not only are the designs pretty much never memorable, but they only get a few weeks in the sun before everyone forgets about them. Poor old Izzy is one of these forgotten souls, but he got his own game about collecting the famous rings – let's see what happens at the end...



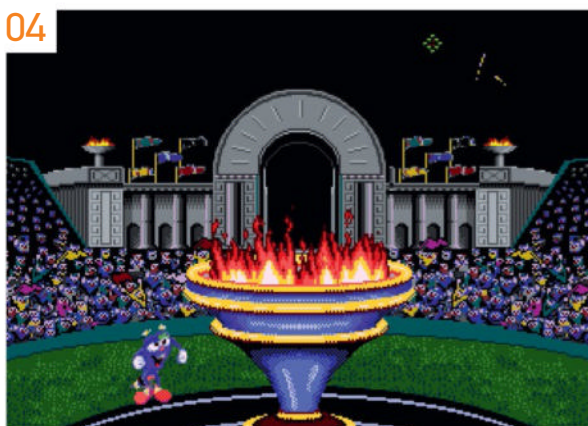
01 » You know, we know another blue platform game star who runs around collecting rings. We see what you're trying to do here Izzy, but frankly you can't pull the wool over our eyes.



02 » Wait, is that a lighter? Izzy, what are you planning to do here, old chap? We were only teasing you a bit, given that Sonic is associated with far more Olympics videogames than you.



03 » Oh lord, no! Izzy has thrown the lighter into the vaguely futuristic bowl, ruining the job for whoever was supposed to finish the torch relay! You've gone too far now, Izzy. You're in big trouble.



04 » Izzy doesn't care. Izzy always knew that he was never made to last, even by the standards of 16-bit mascot platform game stars. As he watches the fire burn, he jumps up and down with glee. "First Atlanta, then the world," he repeats over and over in an unsettling voice.



05 » No longer constrained by the shackles of his role as the cartoon representative of a sporting event, Izzy experiences true freedom for the first time. He wishes the athletes luck – with their physical prowess, they have a small chance of surviving Izzy's next rampage.



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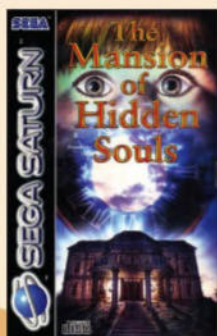
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THE MINI
SHIGERU
MIYAMOTO
COMPANION



THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO NINTENDO'S LEGENDARY CREATOR

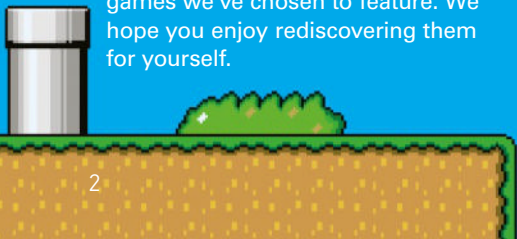


MIYAMOTO MAGIC

★ Few game designers are as well known or as respected as **Shigeru Miyamoto**. The talented developer has been involved with making games since the Seventies, and shows no sign of slowing down. While he has now moved into a production/supervisory role at Nintendo, he's still involved in some of the company's biggest games, from *The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild* to *Pikmin 4*. He's also heavily involved in the non-gaming side of Nintendo, such as *The Super Mario Bros Movie*, *Super Nintendo World* and the recently announced live-action *Zelda* film.



For this special 32-page tome, we're more interested in Miyamoto's past, meaning you'll find its pages filled with some of the greatest games of all time, from *Donkey Kong*, *Super Mario Bros* and *The Legend Of Zelda*, to *Super Mario Kart*, *Super Mario 64* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*. We'll investigate the many big franchises that he has been involved with, and have added a Collector's Guide on page 30 so you can tick off the numerous games we've chosen to feature. We hope you enjoy rediscovering them for yourself.

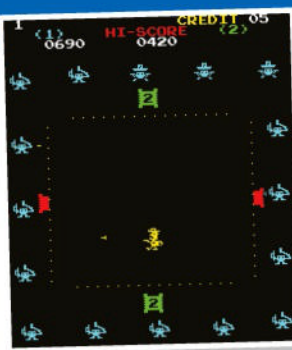
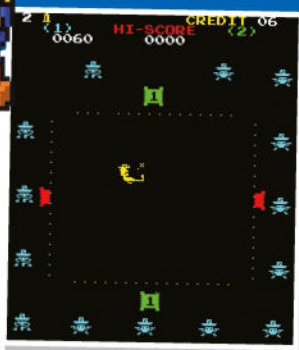


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I SHOT THE SHERIFF

SHERIFF 1979

ARCADE • ARTIST

★ The first notable game that Shigeru Miyamoto was involved with plays like a cross between Taito's *Space Invaders* and *Gun Fight*. Taking control of the titular sheriff, your aim is to take out the many bandits who slowly amble around the other side of a fence, while you fight off their advances from inside it. It's possible to shoot between the gaps of the fence, but you can also destroy it, which makes enemies easier to

drop, but also makes it more likely that you'll take a bullet from them. Condors fly across the top of the screen, similar to the UFOs in *Space Invaders*, while there's also a backstory that involves you trying to rescue Betty who has been captured by the foul bandits. With its distinct controls that feature a joystick for moving and a dial for aiming your gun, *Sheriff* proved to be a big success for Nintendo, with Miyamoto himself playing it in arcades.

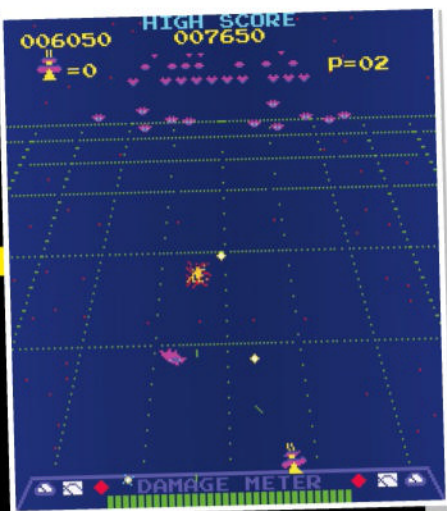
» [Arcade] You'll get rushed if the bandits break inside your fence.

SCOPE THIS OUT

RADAR SCOPE 1979

ARCADE • DESIGNER

★ Designed by Miyamoto, *Radar Scope* is a perfectly serviceable take on the popular arcade hit *Space Invaders*, and it features a rather neat perspective trick that would appear in later gems like *Juno First*. The erratic movement of its ships is a nice touch and we love how they ominously mass at the top of the screen, but it's pretty standard stuff. Interestingly, what would come from *Radar Scope*'s innards would help change gaming forever...



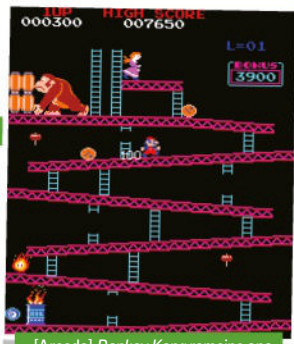
» [Arcade] You won't remember the gameplay, but you will remember the colourful explosions.

THE BIRTH OF TWO ICONS

DONKEY KONG 1981

ARCADE • DESIGNER

★ Although Shigeru Miyamoto came up with *Donkey Kong*'s gameplay mechanics and iconic characters, programming duties were instead handled by Ikegami Tsushinki, a Japanese manufacturer. *Donkey Kong* helped redefine arcade gaming due to its memorable characters, an actual story and new play mechanics like the ability to jump over gaps and objects. Both Donkey Kong and Jumpman (as Mario was then known) would go on to become massive stars, while the game itself changed Nintendo's arcade fortunes in the West.



» [Arcade] *Donkey Kong* remains one of the most popular arcade games when it comes to score chasing.



» [Arcade] It wasn't easy, but we caught all the hearts Olive Oyl threw to us.

HEARTS AND SPINACH

POPEYE 1982

ARCADE • DESIGNER

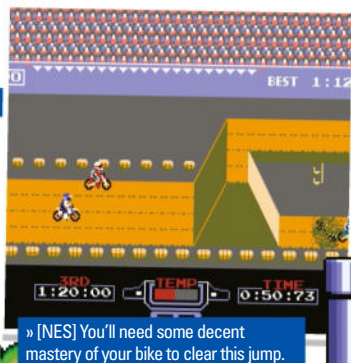
★ This is another early offering from Miyamoto, and one of Nintendo's earliest games to feature a licence. In some ways it's a repeat of *Donkey Kong*, with Popeye and Brutus standing in for Jumpman and Donkey Kong. Still, it's a madcap chase around the four-tiered stage, with Popeye trying to collect numerous hearts from Olive Oyl while avoiding the clutches of Brutus and the Sea Hag. It's a fun platformer, full of deft little touches.

THRILLS AND SPILLS

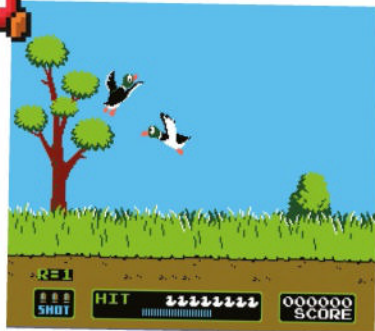
EXCITEBIKE 1984

NES • DESIGNER

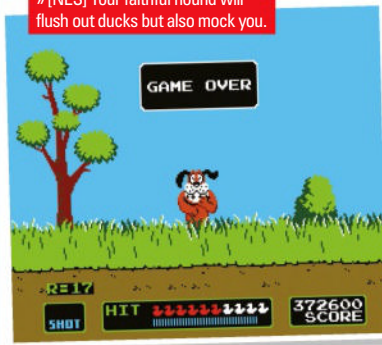
★ This is an excellent racer from Miyamoto that allows you to tear around cleverly designed tracks on a dirt bike. It's notable for a neat risk versus reward system that revolves around increased acceleration raising the temperature of your bike (causing it to be immobilised while it cools down) and an excellent editing mode. It was succeeded in 2000 by the excellent *Excitebike 64*, while *Excitebike: World Rally* on Nintendo's WiiWare service arrived in 2009.



» [NES] You'll need some decent mastery of your bike to clear this jump.



» [NES] Your faithful hound will flush out ducks but also mock you.



ZAP! AND THE DUCK IS GONE

DUCK HUNT 1984

NES • DESIGNER, DIRECTOR



While we don't condone the shooting of real-life animals, we are partial to the odd bit of digital animal culling. Anyone who owned a NES and a Zapper back in the day will be more than familiar with *Duck Hunt*, as it came with the lightgun peripheral. A NES launch game in North America, *Duck Hunt* proved so successful that it was available in several packages, including a bundle where it was sold with ROB and the game *Gyromite*, and the Action Set, where it came on a dual cartridge with *Super Mario Bros.* For all its popularity, *Duck Hunt* is actually quite a simplistic game, with the aim being to shoot ducks that your dog flushes out before they fly away. If you abhor hurting any type of animal, digital or otherwise, there's a clay pigeon option which means you can shoot away guilt free. The game got a Wii U Virtual Console release in 2014.

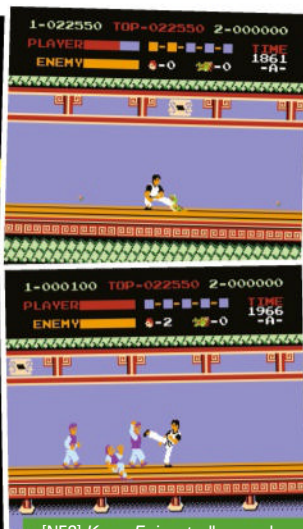
FAST-PACED ACTION

KUNG FU 1985

NES • DESIGNER, DIRECTOR



Although Shigeru Miyamoto is best known for coming up with original game ideas he's also occasionally converted the work of others. *Kung Fu* is a perfect example of that, with the creative genius deciding to convert Irem's arcade hit *Kung-Fu Master* to the NES in order to get a better understanding of how a side-scrolling action game might work. The end result is a polished adaptation of the popular coin-op with an extra difficulty mode that means hero Thomas is assaulted by countless goons as he attempts to retrieve his girlfriend Sylvia from the deadly clutches of Mr X. With its polished controls, great-looking visuals and fast-paced action, *Kung Fu* is a great NES game, which helped pave the way for the rather magnificent *Super Mario Bros.*

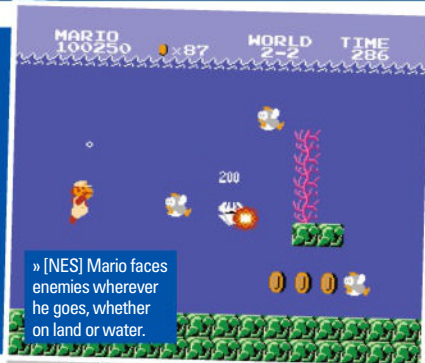


» [NES] *Kung Fu* is actually an early film licence, as it's a loose adaptation of Jackie Chan's *Wheels On Meals*.

MIYAMOTO'S MARVELLOUS
PLATFORMER

SUPER MARIO BROS 1985

NES • DESIGNER, DIRECTOR



★ While Mario was already well known thanks to the likes of *Donkey Kong*, *Wrecking Crew* and *Mario Bros*, it was this delightful gem from 1985 that helped turn him into the global phenomenon he is today. *Super Mario Bros* had everything, went on to typify what people would expect from a Shigeru Miyamoto game, and remains a great platformer in general. The level design is ingenious; it's filled with all manner of secrets to uncover, while the gameplay mechanics are polished to perfection. Equally satisfying is the soundtrack, which is filled with clever flourishes and excellent spot effects. There's no aspect of Miyamoto's game that disappoints and it still remains a fantastic title today. *Super Mario Bros* has shifted over 40 million copies since its release and has spawned numerous sequels, making it one of Miyamoto's most successful and important games.

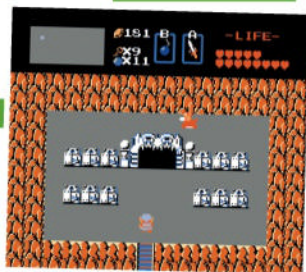
IT'S TIME FOR ADVENTURE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA 1986

NES • DESIGNER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

★ While crushingly difficult at times, the first *Zelda* features a host of hallmarks and key gameplay mechanics that would help turn the series into one of Nintendo's biggest franchises. Originally a launch game for the Famicom Disk System, cartridge versions arrived soon after, with the US release one of the first games to use a battery back-up. The ability to explore the overworld and investigate dungeons helps add to the game's sense of wonder, while its weapons always serve useful purposes outside of simply slaying monsters. Granted, this rich blend of exploration, combat and puzzle-solving certainly wasn't unique to Miyamoto's epic adventure, but rarely had it been done with such style or panache. Countless games followed and it's become one of Nintendo's most consistent franchises, with a live-action movie on the way as well.

» [NES] Well this looks rather foreboding.





MARIO SUITS UP

SUPER MARIO BROS 3

1988

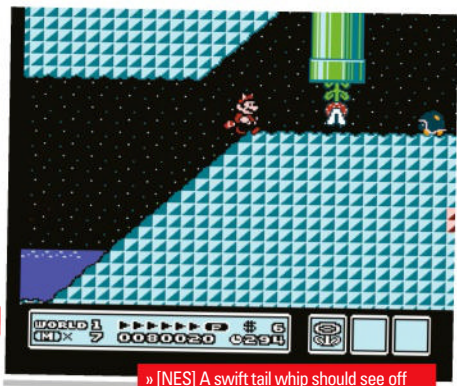
NES • DIRECTOR



With the true *Super Mario Bros 2* being little more than a ridiculously more

difficult set of levels for the original game, it was down to

Shigeru Miyamoto's third *Super Mario Bros* release to help define the genre. It did so in style, introducing a host of characters and mechanics that would shape both the franchise and genre in general. Locations like Giant Land and the airships linger long in the memory, the Hammer Bros, Koopalings and power-up suits are all introduced, while the excellent world map and numerous minigames would crop up throughout the rest of the series. It became a huge success for Nintendo, helped in no small part by massive exposure in the Fred Savage-starring *The Wizard*, which was effectively a 100-minute advert for Nintendo and its products, including the ill-fated Power Glove.



» [NES] A swift tail whip should see off this annoyingly obstructive Piranha Plant.

PACK-IN PERFECTION

SUPER MARIO WORLD

1990

SNES • PRODUCER



For many gamers this remains the pinnacle of Mario's 2D platforming

career, and it's easy to see why – virtually every aspect of *Super Mario World* is perfect.

The game's amazingly crafted levels make use of the hardware capabilities of the SNES to create new hazards, with bosses often using Mode 7 rotation effects, and you'll have a great time finding all 96 stage exits. The stunning sprite design shows colour and details that were impossible on the NES, and Mario even gains a new companion in Yoshi, the little dinosaur who devours enemies while serving as a trusty steed. It may have been the first *Super Mario Bros* game without Shigeru Miyamoto in the director's chair, but you never would have thought it from the end result. It's quite simply the best platformer of all time, and one we'd love to see given a sparkling HD 2D makeover.

» [SNES] Be it fruit or foe, Yoshi will eat it – or at least have a good try.





» [SNES] Extreme corners may look tricky, but there's always a good way to tackle them.

FAST, FURIOUS, FUTURISTIC

F-ZERO 1990

SNES • PRODUCER

★ When *F-Zero* launched with the SNES in 1990, it felt like a revelation for those lucky enough to play it. While it wasn't the first futuristic racer of all time, its insane speed and super-slick graphics ensured it was one of the few home racers that was able to match the sheer pace and polished visuals of popular arcade racers. It wasn't just a pretty face either, as the technical showcase was backed up by a handling model with real depth. Though the game's lack of multiplayer felt like an oversight, it was in fact a concession to technical constraints, as maintaining the speed of the game wouldn't have been possible with a split-screen mode. Thankfully, the masterfully designed tracks, superb Mode 7 visuals and excellent soundtrack soon made you forget all about it.





THE FRANCHISE



DONKEY KONG

Shigeru Miyamoto's breakout game featured two iconic characters: Donkey Kong and Jumpman, later known as Mario. The big primate has appeared in numerous games since, with his latest, *Donkey Kong: Bonanza*, due shortly on Switch 2.



SUPER MARIO BROS

The *Super Mario Bros* series started off on the Nintendo Entertainment System, and turned into one of Nintendo's most successful franchises. Mario has gone on to become the most recognisable videogame character of all time.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

An excellent adventure series that continues to reinvent itself with each new instalment. The latest game in the series Miyamoto was involved with was *Tears Of The Kingdom* and he's producing the live-action movie.



F-ZERO

This entertaining racing series introduced Captain Falcon and has received many sequels and add-ons since its 1990 inception. Frustratingly, there are no plans for a new game, despite the recent online release of *F-Zero 99*.



POKÉMON

Starting off on the Game Boy, Pokémon has turned into a gaming phenomenon, and is the second-biggest games franchise after *Mario*. It has spawned countless sequels and a number of spin-offs.



MARIO PARTY

This is an interesting collaboration with Hudson Soft that combines minigames with the layout of a board game and is focussed on multiplayer fun. *Super Mario Party Jamboree* is the latest game in the series..



PAPER MARIO

This is a charming, RPG-lite series in which all the characters are paper thin. It is mainly handled by Intelligent Systems which issued a remake of *The Thousand Year Door* in 2024.



SUPER SMASH BROS

A *Smash Bros* game has appeared on every home system since the N64 and even made it to the 3DS. The latest game is notable for its gigantic roster of 89 characters from various companies.

MAKER

A QUICK LOOK AT THE BIGGEST GAMING FRANCHISES SHIGERU MIYAMOTO HAS BEEN INVOLVED WITH

MARIO KART

An extremely popular SNES racing game that created a brand-new sub-genre and is now one of Nintendo's biggest franchises. *Mario Kart World* is just around the corner and features 24 racers, changing weather conditions and an open-world game design.



METROID PRIME

An offshoot of the main *Metroid* franchise, *Metroid Prime* features several games and spin-offs, including *Metroid Prime Hunters* and *Metroid Prime Pinball*. *Metroid Prime 4: Beyond* is due shortly for both Switch consoles.



WAVE RACE

This is a smaller series from Miyamoto. The franchise has actually lain dormant since *Wave Race: Blue Storm*, a GameCube launch game, meaning that we're well overdue for a brand-new offering.



PIKMIN

Pikmin is one of Miyamoto's most recent series, having first appeared on the GameCube in 2001. It's a charming spin on the RTS genre, and recently received a fourth game for the Switch in 2023.



STAR FOX

This is another Nintendo series that doesn't get the updates it deserves. *Star Fox 64* remains the jewel in the crown (with a 3DS update), but the last game, *Star Fox Zero*, is now nine years old.



PILOTWINGS

This is one of Miyamoto's smallest franchises, with just three games in the series. It's a real shame that Nintendo does so little with it, as the 3DS outing proved to be a particularly enjoyable (if all too brief) game.



» [SNES] Views just didn't get any better than this back in the 16-bit days.

UP, UP AND AWAY

PILOTWINGS 1990

SNES • PRODUCER



Powered by sensational Mode 7 visuals, *Pilotwings* dispenses with the traditional staid and boring control focus of past flight simulators to produce a far more enjoyable and lighter experience.

After extensive training, you're rewarded with the chance to control a heavily armed attack helicopter in the final stage, but it's the sheer relaxation from simply flying around that makes it such a joy to play.

A TRIP TO THE DARK SIDE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST 1991

SNES • PRODUCER



The moment when Link steps into the Dark World into an alternative version of Hyrule remains a classic videogame twist. It's the icing on a delicious slice of adventure cake, which greatly expanded upon the original *Zelda's* brilliance to make the most of the SNES' capabilities. Bosses are bigger and more imaginative, weapons are integrated exceptionally well into the game's devious dungeons, while the soundtrack is truly sublime.



» [SNES] Don't fall when fighting the Moldorm, or you'll have to work your way back to it.

JET-SKI JOYRIDE

WAVE RACE 1991

GAME BOY • PRODUCER



Nobody ever seems to remember this jet-ski racer when we bring it up, believing the franchise first began with the N64 game. It's a pity, as *Wave Race* is a highly entertaining game that allows you to race up to three other friends across various well-designed courses. Race mode is by far the most enjoyable, but the included Slalom mode offers a far tougher challenge.



» [Game Boy] There aren't many four-player Game Boy games, but this one is worth seeking out.

LAP-1

ALWAYS IN POLE POSITION

SUPER MARIO KART 1992

SNES • PRODUCER

★ The game that created a whole new sub-genre. Mario and pals took to the road to star in this highly charged racer that made amazing use of Mode 7. Fuelled by catchy tunes and a highly entertaining split-screen multiplayer mode, its highlight was the fantastic Time Trials that offered endless replay value. While it has received numerous sequels over the years, many still prefer the original SNES game.

» [SNES] "This shell's red, it must be yours," Luigi taunts as he attacks his brother.



» [SNES] The Super FX chip would go on to be used in a variety of other SNES games.

AN FX-TIVE 3D SHOWCASE

STAR FOX 1993

SNES • PRODUCER

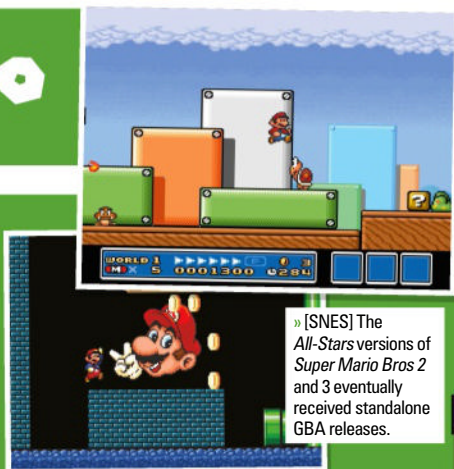
★ *Star Fox* was a collaboration between Jez San's Argonaut Software and Nintendo EAD. Argonaut developed the Super FX accelerator chip in the cartridge, which allowed for polygonal graphics in this slick on-rails shooter that introduced the world to Fox McCloud and his anthropomorphic crew. Interestingly, *Star Fox* was renamed *Star Wing* in Europe as a game of the same name already existed on 8-bit computers.

AN IDEA THAT MIGHT CATCH ON

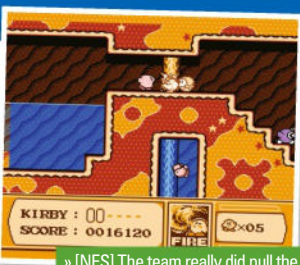
SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS 1993

SNES • PRODUCER

★ This pack of classic Mario adventures from the NES is one of the earliest retro compilations to hit home consoles, and it's an example of remakes being done right. All the games have had their presentation upgraded to SNES standards, and for players outside of Japan, it was the first opportunity to experience the Japanese edition of *Super Mario Bros 2*.



» [SNES] The *All-Stars* versions of *Super Mario Bros 2* and *3* eventually received standalone GBA releases.



» [NES] The team really did pull the best out of the decade-old 8-bit hardware for Kirby's Adventure.

LEAVE YOUR NES TICKLED PINK

KIRBY'S ADVENTURE 1993

NES • PRODUCER



Although Kirby had previously appeared in *Kirby's Dream Land* for the Game Boy, it was this second entry in the series that marked Shigeru Miyamoto's first involvement.

This is the game that really defined Kirby's character, as it gave the pink hero the ability to copy the abilities of inhaled enemies. It's also one of the most impressive NES games, with HAL Laboratory building on years of experience with the hardware to deliver an audiovisual treat.

A RACER WITH DEPTH

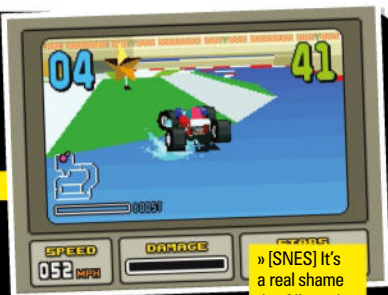
STUNT RACE FX 1994

SNES • PRODUCER



This racer, known as *Wild Trax* in Japan, is a Super FX-enhanced affair that uses polygons for both its vehicles and the circuits they race on.

The 3D that was a huge selling point in the mid-Nineties may not be as impressive today, but the game is still a joy to play thanks to the attention paid to the handling model, which ensures that you'll have a genuinely different experience with each car you choose.



» [SNES] It's a real shame that Nintendo never released a *Stunt Race FX* sequel, as it is great fun.

THE GORILLA'S GREAT RETURN

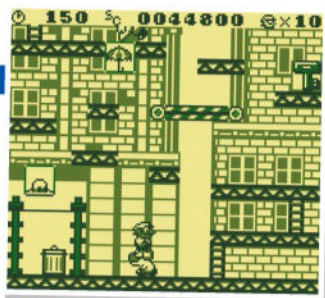
DONKEY KONG 1994

GAME BOY • PRODUCER

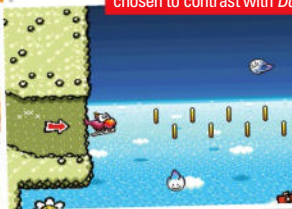
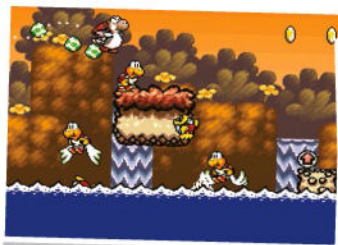


While it's notable for being the first game to take full advantage of the Super Game Boy, it's the stunning gameplay that makes this a classic.

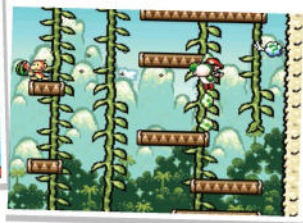
Initially it seems like a monochromatic version of the original game, albeit with new moves. Once those stages are completed, *Donkey Kong* reveals itself to be a platformer with a huge number of stages. A planned sequel, *Donkey Kong Plus*, resurfaced as *Mario Vs Donkey Kong* on the GBA a decade later.



» [Game Boy] The complexity of stages quickly ramps up once you're past those first four arcade designs.



» [SNES] The hand-drawn style of *Yoshi's Island* was deliberately chosen to contrast with *Donkey Kong Country's* pre-rendered graphics.



THE BEST BABYSITTING JOB

SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND

1995

SNES • PRODUCER

★ Yoshi and his multicoloured mates have accidentally ended up in charge of baby Mario, and they've got to reunite him with Luigi, who is unfortunately currently kidnapped by Kamek. That means making your way through stages without getting hit, lest the infant leave Yoshi's back and starts bawling until he's recovered or kidnapped. Fortunately, the stellar level design of *Mario* games has been maintained, but Yoshi offers a different

platforming experience as he can now lob eggs at baddies and even transform into helicopters, submarines and more. The crayon-style look of the game stood in stark contrast to the trendy 3D graphics of the era, with the Super FX2 chip used to overload on 2D effects such as rotation and scaling for individual sprites. A Game Boy Advance version was released as part of the *Super Mario Advance* series in 2002, with some extra levels and the occasional visual downgrade.

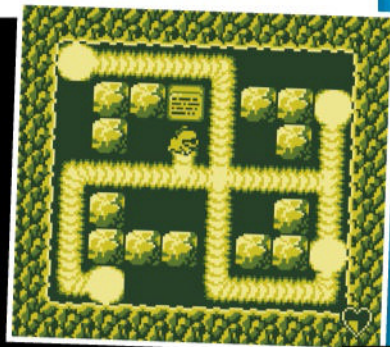
A TRUE UNDERGROUND HIT

MOLE MANIA

1996

GAME BOY • PRODUCER

★ Having been released at a time when the Game Boy wasn't getting much attention, *Mole Mania* tends to be overlooked. That's a shame, because it's a very enjoyable puzzle game that challenges you to navigate both above and below the ground, on your quest to rescue Muddy Mole's wife and children. In two-player games, players take turns as Muddy and the farmer Jinbe, competing to see who can steal the most cabbages from their opponent.



» [Game Boy] The trick to *Mole Mania* is knowing where you can resurface from under the ground.



» [Nintendo 64] Simply sneaking past enemies felt great thanks to the N64 console's analogue control stick.

A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION

SUPER MARIO 64 1996

N64 • DIRECTOR, PRODUCER



After redefining the 2D platformer with *Super Mario Bros* in 1985, Shigeru Miyamoto did the same thing for 3D 11 years

later. Everything about *Super Mario 64* is a triumph. Its design is exceptional; the 3D camera rarely intrudes, while the range of varied objectives involved in acquiring the game's 120 stars ensures that you're never bored – racing penguins, exploring sunken ships or outrunning turtles ensures Mario's adventure is never dull. The plumber himself is a joy to control before you even leave the castle grounds, and the imaginative levels Mario visits serve as a masterclass in creating 3D game worlds, making virtually every 3D platformer that came before it feel incredibly dated and setting the standard for future games to follow. It's an amazing achievement that holds up as an exceptional example of the genre today.

A SECOND FLIGHT OF FANCY

PILOTWINGS 64 1996

N64 • DESIGNER



Pilotwings 64 launched alongside *Super Mario 64*, and while it wasn't as genre defining

as its groundbreaking peer, it still proved to be an essential game. This time around, you take control of a hang-glider, gyrocopter and rocket belt as you take on familiar tasks such as flying through rings, as well as new goals like snapping photos of monuments. There are even bonus games to enjoy, including skydiving and a human cannonball challenge – try launching yourself into Mario's nose in the latter. Although the N64's second launch game was farmed out to American developer Paradigm Entertainment, there were still plenty of neat little touches to it that left you in no doubt of Shigeru Miyamoto's involvement. The 3D has aged a little now, but it remains a highly enjoyable simulator.



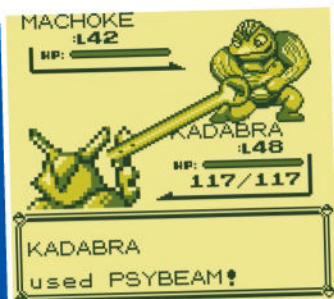
» [Nintendo 64] Once again, *Pilotwings* served as a showcase for a new console, with stunning scenery.

BULBASAUR, CHARMANDER OR SQUIRTLE?

POKEMON: RED & BLUE 1996

GAME BOY • PRODUCER

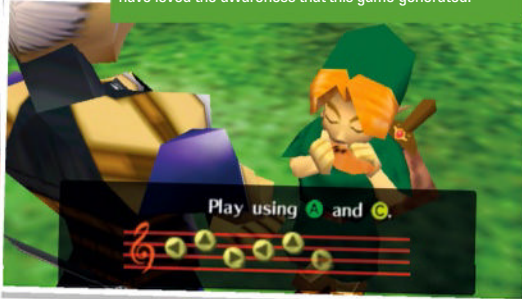
★ Known as *Pocket Monsters* in Japan, Game Freak's game is stupidly successful, and has become one of the biggest videogame franchises of all time. While the gameplay sticks relatively closely to the standard Japanese RPG template, what sets it apart is the ability to capture the enemies you fight in the wild and turn them into part of your team. The goal of trying to capture all 151 different Pokémon makes it frightfully addictive, and requires you to trade with other players to get version-exclusive monsters. In Japanese releases, Shigeru is one of the default names suggested for your rival. The game has been remade as *Pokémon Fire Red* and *Leaf Green* on the GBA, and *Pokémon Let's Go Pikachu* and *Let's Go Eevee* on the Switch.



» [Game Boy] Kadabra here needs the Link Cable – it won't evolve into Alakazam until it's traded.



» [Nintendo 64] The ocarina manufacturing business must have loved the awareness that this game generated.



IT'S TIME FOR ADVENTURE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME 1998

N64 • DESIGNER, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER

★ This is still considered by many to be the best *Zelda* game ever made. Just like Mario before him, Link's first steps into 3D created an impossibly high bar that all future 3D adventures would be judged by. Stepping onto Hyrule Field for the first time remains one of the best moments of any videogame, while the imaginative bosses and clever dungeon designs have rarely been bettered. At the time, the land of Hyrule had never been as tantalising to explore as it was in *Ocarina Of Time*, while the well-crafted gameplay and expertly paced story created a template for all similar games to follow. While it has been repackaged numerous times in the intervening years, it's the incredibly polished 3DS remake by Nintendo EAD and Grezzo that should be considered the definitive version of Shigeru Miyamoto's masterpiece.



THE NEED FOR SPEED

F-ZERO X 1998

N64 • PRODUCER

★ Everything about Nintendo's sequel was bigger, faster and louder than its predecessor. You can now battle against 29 other competitors and even attack them, there's a huge number of different vehicles to unlock and there are numerous gameplay modes to tackle: Death Race, Grand Prix, Practice, Race, Time Attack and Vs Battle. It's also notable for the X-Cup which has you tackling six randomly generated tracks.



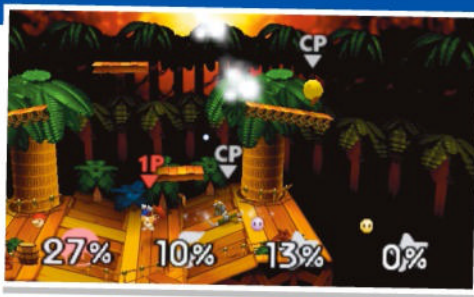
» [Nintendo 64] Competing against 29 other vehicles made for some truly hectic racing.

A SMASHING GOOD TIME

SUPER SMASH BROS 1999

N64 • PRODUCER

★ Trust Nintendo to take a traditional genre and add a new spin. *Smash Bros* saw Nintendo's biggest stars do battle by focussing on manic brawling and crazy power-ups. The mechanics are surprisingly deep, while the roster has expanded over the years to include everyone from Sonic and Solid Snake in *Super Smash Bros Brawl* to Simon Belmont in *Super Smash Bros Ultimate*.



» [GameCube] It's so much more fun than *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*.



BUSTIN' MAKE ME FEEL GOOD

LUIGI'S MANSION 2001

GAME CUBE • PRODUCER

★ While criticised on launch for not being a Mario game as well as the brevity of its main quest, there's actually a lot to love about *Luigi's Mansion*. It's wonderfully atmospheric thanks to impressive lighting effects and creepy music, while the numerous ghosts you capture offer plenty of variation in the way you expose their weaknesses to hoover them up. It was remade in 2018 for Nintendo's 3DS.



» [GameCube] How could you not fall in love with these little fellas?

REALLY TINY STRATEGY

PIKMIN 2001

GAMECUBE • PRODUCER



Trust Miyamoto and Nintendo to put a

charming spin on the RTS genre. Playing as Captain Olimar, *Pikmin* sees you controlling the stranded hero as he attempts to retrieve the missing parts of his ship with the help of the Pikmin. These cute critters have a number of abilities that Olimar must take advantage of to solve puzzles or take out the planet's other denizens. Its most recent sequel can be found on the Switch.

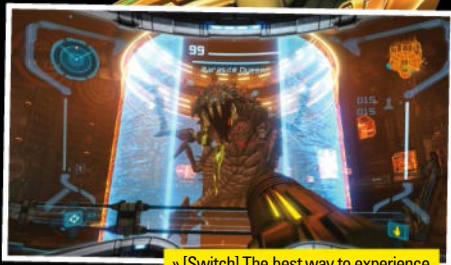
A TRIP TO THE DARK SIDE

METROID PRIME 1991

GAMECUBE • DESIGNER



Retro Studios went through lots of heartbreak with its first *Metroid* game, with Miyamoto demanding it shift to a first-person perspective after he became unhappy with the third-person game the studio had produced. While the deadline was tight, the pay-off was easily worth it, with the studio delivering an exceptional adventure that felt like the *Metroid* games of old despite the brand-new viewpoint.



» [Switch] The best way to experience *Metroid Prime* today is on the Switch.

ISLAND IN THE SUN

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 2002

GAMECUBE • PRODUCER



Although it is often considered to be one of the weaker 3D *Super Mario* games, there's still plenty of reasons to play *Sunshine*. It's a gorgeous-looking game with a striking and colourful aesthetic, the introduction of the FLUDD backpack adds a nice gameplay wrinkle to the core platforming, the boss encounters are great, and Shadow Mario makes for an interesting antagonist.



» [GameCube] Mario considers getting a job as a cleaner if the plumbing work dries up.



» [GameCube] As you can see, Pac-Man has to be very close by for the ghosts to spot him.

HIGH-TECH HIDE AND SEEK

PAC-MAN VS 2003

GAMECUBE • DESIGNER, PRODUCER

★ Shigeru Miyamoto occasionally likes to dabble with the IP of other companies, and one of his best collaborations is this brilliant take on *Pac-Man*. One player as Pac-Man uses the Game Boy Advance, with the traditional view of the maze that you'd see in the original arcade game, while up to three friends can control his ghost adversaries on the GameCube. The ghosts are disadvantaged by having only a limited view of their immediate surroundings, making it harder to locate Pac-Man and coordinate attacks, making for an exhilarating game of cat-and-mouse. Rather than being given a regular retail release, *Pac-Man Vs* was packaged as a bonus disc with numerous other games, including *R: Racing Evolution*, *I-Ninja* and *Pac-Man World 2*. The game later appeared on *Namco Museum DS* and *Namco Museum* for the Switch.

DRUM UP SOME FUN

DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT 2004

GAMECUBE • PRODUCER

★ This highly innovative platformer was built around the GameCube's DK Bongos, as used by the *Donkey Konga* music games. By hitting the bongos and clapping your hands, Donkey Kong jumps, punches and counter-attacks his way through a variety of glorious-looking environments. The game's combo system is reminiscent of the music games the peripheral was designed for, rewarding players for seamless movement in a way that will please those with a love of score-attack games. The boss battles with Donkey Kong's oversized foes are fast and frantic, with the need to furiously thump the drums lending a pleasing physicality to the fights. A Wii version was released in 2008 with additional and modified levels, but uses a more traditional control scheme that loses some of what made the game so distinctive.



» [GameCube] This game seems like a silly idea, but we've seen it convert our most sceptical friends.

PUPPY IN YOUR POCKET

NINTENDOGS 2005

DS • GENERAL PRODUCER

★ Trust Shigeru Miyamoto to come up with a concept of making you walk a dog and have it be anything but boring. *Nintendogs* is a virtual life sim, but one in which you can't let your cute puppy die (believe us, we've tried). It's admittedly light on substance, but there's something strangely endearing about caring for your digital furball, especially as you can talk to it using the console's microphone. *Nintendogs* was a huge boost to Nintendo's ambition to expand beyond traditional gaming audiences as it was extremely popular with girls, and an enormous 23.96 million copies of the five versions of the game were sold, and it helped sell the DS when bundled. Its 3DS sequel added equally cute felines in 2011.



» [DS] You can, if you are so inclined, dress up your dog in a fetching hat.



» [GameCube] Link's left-handed here, but the whole game was flipped on Wii so he'd be right-handed.



NOW, YOU ARE THE SWORDSMAN

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS 2006

GAMECUBE/WII • PRODUCER

★ Though the move away from the cartoonish style of *The Wind Waker* was celebrated by many fans when *Twilight Princess* was initially revealed, some were disappointed that it was effectively a re-skinned *Ocarina Of Time* when it finally arrived. That would be missing the point though, as it's another superb adventure yarn, delivering plenty of exceptionally well-designed dungeons and memorable characters, and Link's new wolf form does allow for an interesting secondary approach to combat. It was both a Wii launch game and the GameCube's swansong, and we'll go on record to say that while it lacks the aesthetic presentation of its Wii counterpart, the controls on the GameCube version are better. The game was remastered in HD for the Wii U in 2016, by the Australian studio Tantalus Media.

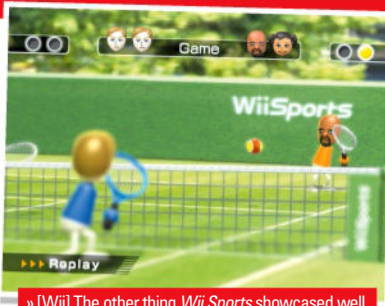


GET YOUR BODY MOVING

WII SPORTS 2006

WII • PRODUCER

★ *Wii Sports* may have been simplistic, but it was pivotal in demonstrating Nintendo's brand-new console and the appeal of its unusual motion control scheme. The game was bundled with Wii hardware and proved to be a perfect pack-in, as it appealed to a whole generation of non-gamers by lowering barriers to entry, ditching button-based controls in favour of easy-to-understand gestures. It also provided plenty of fun for seasoned gamers, as the frantic flailing it inspired made it a perfect party game. Tennis and Bowling were arguably the best of the five sports on offer, but millions of players also enjoyed swinging virtual golf clubs and baseball bats, as well as throwing clumsy jabs in Boxing. The 2009 sequel *Wii Sports Resort*, which uses the Wii MotionPlus for more accurate motion detection, is a far superior game.



» [Wii] The other thing *Wii Sports* showcased well was the console's customisable Mii characters.



MOBILE MARIO

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS 2006

DS • SUPERVISOR

★ We're not too sure how supervisor roles work at Nintendo but the magic of Miyamoto can still be felt in *New Super Mario Bros*.

The game proved to be a triumph for the team making it, as it went on to sell more than 30 million units, players obviously impressed with its fusion of classic and new ideas.

While it could be argued that the *New* series lacks the creativity of Mario's mainline 3D games, there's still plenty to enjoy as you romp through the game's varied levels. New power-ups such as the Mega Mushroom swell Mario to a gargantuan size, three coins are deviously hidden in each level, ensuring plenty of replay value, and there are numerous other secrets to find.

Yes it's easy, but that just means you're more likely to discover its many delights.



» [DS] Mario's just consumed a Mega Mushroom and is going to flatten some Goombas.

IT'S OUT OF THIS WORLD

SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2007

WII • DESIGNER, PRODUCER

★ While *Super Mario Sunshine* tried to recapture the 3D brilliance of *Super Mario 64*, it was *Super Mario Galaxy* that really upped the ante for 3D platforming. The key concept here is that Mario mostly spends his time traversing micro-planets with their own gravitational pull, rather than traditional flat stages. Many worlds are comprised of chains of these planets, providing an element of linearity and focus that contrasts with the more open stages of previous 3D *Mario* games. It remains an astonishing platformer, full of creativity and clever suits for Mario that really take the genre in fresh and exciting directions. While the 2010 sequel improves on the original in several ways (including the introduction of Yoshi), it's the sheer impact of the original that ensures its inclusion here. *Super Mario Galaxy* was re-released as part of *Super Mario 3D All-Stars* for the Switch in 2020.



» [Wii] Despite the Wii's deliberately modest specs, *Super Mario Galaxy* still manages to look spectacular in many places.



» [Wii] Darran spent a lot of time playing Step Plus in *Wii Fit*.

EXERCISING FOR GAMERS

WII FIT 2007

WII • DESIGNER

★ **How do you make exercise fun?** The answer from Nintendo and Shigeru Miyamoto resulted in one of the most interesting games to appear on the Wii. Utilising the Balance Board which came packaged with the game, *Wii Fit* lets players take part in a host of exercises that range from running laps around Wuhu Island, a large selection of yoga positions, using a hula hoop and participating in rhythm boxing. The presentation throughout the game is faultless, while the clever use of in-game Achievements does give you a surprising amount of motivation to try and actually lose weight (Darran even had a monthly weight-loss column in *nRevolution*). *Wii Fit* became a huge success for Nintendo, selling over 22 million copies. It was followed by the sequels *Wii Fit Plus* and *Wii Fit U*.

NOT ONE TO TRUMPET

WII MUSIC 2008

WII • DESIGNER, PRODUCER

★ *Wii Music* arrived at a time when the likes of *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* had driven rhythm action games to unprecedented levels of success, but Shigeru Miyamoto's contribution to the genre was surprisingly lacklustre. This was mainly down to the over-reliance on public domain music that ranged from *Happy Birthday To You* to *La Bamba*. More disappointing, however, was the sheer lack of actual Nintendo compositions, which clocked in at just eight tracks. Although the focus on creativity over the rhythm matching of other games was commendable, the overall simplicity of *Wii Music* was the final straw for fans of the genre, and while it was certainly accessible, it just didn't hold your attention for very long.

Despite Miyamoto making reference to an enhanced version in interviews, the game never received a follow-up.



» [Wii] Plastic instruments were popular at the time, but *Wii Music* works without them.

BE LINK LIKE NEVER BEFORE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD 2011

WII • GENERAL PRODUCER



There are some corners of the internet that suggest that *Skyward Sword* is better than *Ocarina Of Time*.

While we don't agree with that assessment, there's no denying that it represented a big step forward for the series when it first made its debut in 2011. Although *Twilight Princess* had already given gamers the chance to experience a *Zelda* adventure with motion controls, the superior MotionPlus add-on means that *Skyward Sword* is a far more tactile and engaging game to play. It also helps that it has a glorious art style, an interesting storyline and some genuinely dynamic boss encounters that really require you to think while you tackle each mayor. If you're not prepared to dig your Wii out of the cupboard, an enhanced HD version now exists on the Switch.



» [Wii] The combat in *Skyward Sword* makes exceptional use of the MotionPlus controls.

PLUMBING THE DEPTHS

STEEL DIVER 2011

3DS • DESIGNER



If you need proof that even legendary game designers like Shigeru Miyamoto aren't infallible, take a look at *Steel Diver*.

Despite being one of his more recently designed games it lacks the charm and clever mechanics of his earlier titles. What's even more interesting about *Steel Diver* is that it had a rather lengthy development period, with the game first being shown off (admittedly as a tech demo) in 2004 for the Nintendo DS before it finally surfaced on the 3DS as a launch game. On paper *Steel Diver* sounds like a lot of fun as you get to use on-screen dials and switches to manipulate your sub and take out numerous nautical vessels. The reality is that it's quite slow-paced and laboured, making this one of Miyamoto's rare (but interesting) misfires.



» [3DS] Use the lower screen to sink ships and avoid detection.



» [3DS] You don't need the 3D to enjoy *3D Land*, but it certainly helps in some areas.

PORTABLE PERFECTION

SUPER MARIO 3D LAND 2011

3DS • GENERAL PRODUCER

★ This genuinely brilliant platformer combines the precise platforming of Mario's 2D adventures with the imaginative design of his many 3D games.

One of the cleverest things about *3D Land* is how it actually thinks about the use of 3D space and how it affects Mario's surroundings. It really makes the player think, and you'll often find yourself chuckling in admiration as you finally work out how to solve one of the many

lateral puzzles that the designers have thrown at you. In fact, so clever is the platform and puzzle design of *3D Land* that it's surprising that a sequel never appeared on the system (or any other console for that matter). As with any good Mario platformer, many of his traditional power-ups crop up, but there's also a selection of new ones, including a Boomerang Suit and the Propeller Box that greatly augments Mario's jumping abilities.

MARIO BY NUMBERS

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS U 2012

WII U • GENERAL PRODUCER

★ While Mario's first Wii U outing was highly entertaining, there's a definite sense that the *New Super Mario Bros* series is beginning to feel a little too safe. It's basically a *Mario*-game-by-numbers, rarely trying anything new and content with being a completely solid platformer and absolutely nothing more. Of course, any *Mario* game is usually leaps and bounds ahead of the competition, but we always expect more imagination from the moustachioed plumber. An update was released for the Switch in 2019.



» [Wii U] An average *Mario* game is still better than many of the titles released for Nintendo systems.

MINIGAME MAYHEM

NINTENDO LAND 2012

WII U • GENERAL PRODUCER



This Wii U launch game remains an interesting collection of hits and misses.

Games like Mario Chase and Luigi's Ghost Mansion are utterly superb fun, but others like Takamaru's Ninja Castle are completely throwaway and best forgotten. It's great to see Nintendo leaning into its heritage so strongly, and we'd argue that the good minigames easily outweigh the bad ones, but it's also rather telling that Nintendo has never made a sequel of any sort.



» [Wii U] *F-Zero* is one of several classic franchises that *Nintendo Land* draws inspiration from.



» [3DS] It's not just ghosts that haunt the mansions Luigi investigates.

BETTER THAN GHOSTBUSTERS:
FROZEN EMPIRE

LUIGI'S MANSION 2 2013

3DS • PRODUCER



While the original *Luigi's Mansion* is certainly an enjoyable game, this is a far stronger effort. The sequel's greatest strength is that it simply offers far more for the player to do, while the 3D technology (first tested on the original GameCube game, no less) works well. Also known as *Dark Moon*, it works due to its imaginative boss fights, a spooky atmosphere and some genuinely great music. A third game appeared on the Switch in 2019.

BACK TO THE GARDEN

PIKMIN 3 2013

WII U • GENERAL PRODUCER

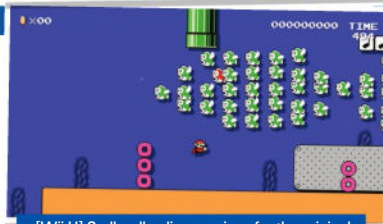


While it doesn't enhance the series like *Pikmin 2* did, this third game remains a supremely compelling title that introduces a third playable character and several new Pikmin.

It looks glorious too, with an enchanting world we'd love to live in. Like many Wii U games, an enhanced version was released for the Nintendo Switch which added numerous extras including new prologues and epilogues and all the DLC. The Switch also received a sequel, *Pikmin 4*, in 2024.



» [Wii U] *Pikmin 3* remains one of the best-looking Wii U games out there.



» [Wii U] Sadly, all online services for the original *Super Mario Maker* were discontinued in 2024.

GAME DESIGN? ANYONE
COULD DO THAT...

SUPER MARIO MAKER 2015

WII U • GENERAL PRODUCER



After decades of crafting exceptional 2D platform games, Nintendo celebrated the 30th anniversary of *Super Mario Bros* by letting players have a go at designing their own levels. It turned out to be a genius move – not because players were able to match what Shigeru Miyamoto and company could design, but because they produced outlandish designs of a kind that wouldn't fly in official *Mario* games.

ALWAYS BOOYAH BACK

SPLATOON 2015

WII U • GENERAL PRODUCER



Despite generating some scepticism upon its initial reveal, this was easily the best thing to come from Nintendo during the turbulent Wii U era. As a family friendly take on the squad-based online shooter, it's a triumph – the Inklings are appealing as characters and the emphasis on capturing territory, rather than splatting enemies, makes it feel less violent. Switch sequels have cemented it as a core franchise for Nintendo.



» [Wii U] There are few sights in gaming quite as colourful as a thoroughly inked *Splatoon* map.

FOX'S FAULTY FLIGHT INSTRUMENTS?

STAR FOX ZERO 2016

WII U • SUPERVISING DIRECTOR, PRODUCER



Developed in collaboration with PlatinumGames, this was the first *Star Fox* game to hit home consoles in over a decade. It reimaged the plot of *Star Fox 64*, and while it's a nice-looking game with some great levels, players weren't thrilled with a control scheme that mixed analogue stick movement with gyroscope-based weapon aiming. The game flopped, and we really hope that it hasn't killed the series.



» [Wii U] *Star Fox Zero* was also criticised for being a rather short game.

LINK'S LARGEST ADVENTURE YET

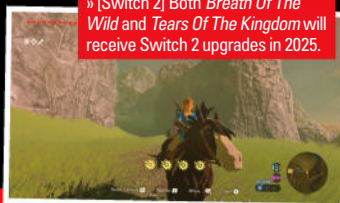
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD 2017

WII U/SWITCH • GENERAL PRODUCER



Multiple delays ensured that this game, once heralded as a potential saviour for the Wii U, is now best remembered for launching the Switch with a bang.

It was worth the wait though, as Hyrule had never been so expansive and the new stamina and crafting systems were gripping. DLC followed, and the 2023 sequel *Tears Of The Kingdom* expanded on the world map introduced here.



» [Switch 2] Both *Breath Of The Wild* and *Tears Of The Kingdom* will receive Switch 2 upgrades in 2025.

A BLASTER FROM THE PAST

STAR FOX 2 2017

SNES • PRODUCER



Despite being finished in the mid-Nineties, this Super FX2 game was shelved as

Nintendo didn't like the way it looked compared to other contemporary 3D games. It finally saw release as a bonus game on the Nintendo Classic Mini: SNES Classic Edition, and is also available via Nintendo Switch Online. The game adds a strategy element to all the space blasting, requiring you to defend Corneria as you take on missions.



» [SNES Mini] This release proved that a previously leaked prototype wasn't as close to completion as once assumed.

BOTH WEIRD AND WONDERFUL

SUPER MARIO BROS WONDER 2023

SWITCH • SUPERVISOR



Having taken a less hands-on role in recent years, Miyamoto's involvement with Mario's latest 2D adventure was to "generally observe things and make comments here and there", as producer Takashi Tezuka told IGN. It certainly feels like a bit of a departure from the standard Mario style – the game is delightfully weird in a way you must experience for yourself.

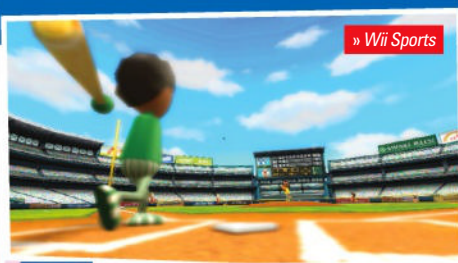


» [Switch] Is that pipe supposed to be wiggling along like a worm? Let's hope so.



» Super Mario Bros

» The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild



» Wii Sports



» F-Zero

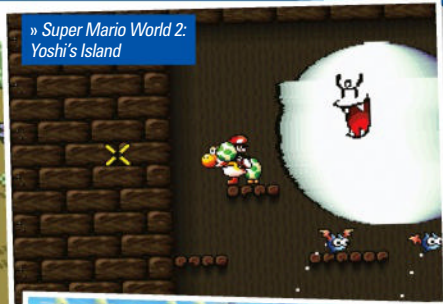
MISSING ANYTHING?

COLLECTOR'S CHECKLIST



Which of our featured Miyamoto games are already part of your collection, and which ones should be? Use this handy list to check off the games within

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ SHERIFF (Arcade) 1979 | ☐ SUPER MARIO KART (SNES) 1992 |
| ☐ RADAR SCOPE (Arcade) 1980 | ☐ STAR FOX (SNES) 1993 |
| ☐ DONKEY KONG (Arcade) 1981 | ☐ SUPER MARIO ALL-STARS (SNES) 1993 |
| ☐ POPEYE (Arcade) 1982 | ☐ KIRBY'S ADVENTURE (NES) 1993 |
| ☐ EXCITEBIKE (NES) 1984 | ☐ STUNT RACE FX (SNES) 1994 |
| ☐ DUCK HUNT (NES) 1984 | ☐ DONKEY KONG (Game Boy) 1994 |
| ☐ KUNG FU (NES) 1985 | ☐ SUPER MARIO WORLD 2:
YOSHI'S ISLAND (SNES) 1995 |
| ☐ SUPER MARIO BROS (NES) 1985 | ☐ MOLE MANIA (Game Boy) 1996 |
| ☐ THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (NES) 1986 | ☐ POKÉMON RED & BLUE (Game Boy) 1996 |
| ☐ SUPER MARIO BROS 3 (NES) 1988 | ☐ SUPER MARIO 64 (Nintendo 64) 1996 |
| ☐ SUPER MARIO WORLD (SNES) 1990 | ☐ PILOTWINGS 64 (Nintendo 64) 1996 |
| ☐ F-ZERO (SNES) 1990 | ☐ F-ZERO X (Nintendo 64) 1998 |
| ☐ PILOTWINGS (SNES) 1990 | ☐ THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
OCARINA OF TIME (Nintendo 64) 1998 |
| ☐ THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
A LINK TO THE PAST (SNES) 1991 | ☐ SUPER SMASH BROS (Nintendo 64) 1999 |
| ☐ WAVE RACE (Game Boy) 1992 | |



❑ **LUIGI'S MANSION** (GameCube) 2001

❑ **PIKMIN** (GameCube) 2001

❑ **SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE** (GameCube) 2002

❑ **METROID PRIME** (GameCube) 2002

❑ **PAC-MAN VS** (GameCube) 2003

❑ **DONKEY KONG: JUNGLE BEAT** (GameCube) 2004

❑ **NINTENDOGS** (DS) 2005

❑ **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS** (GameCube/Wii) 2006

❑ **WII SPORTS** (Wii) 2006

❑ **NEW SUPER MARIO BROS** (DS) 2006

❑ **SUPER MARIO GALAXY** (Wii) 2007

❑ **WII FIT** (Wii) 2007

❑ **WII MUSIC** (Wii) 2008

❑ **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD** (Wii) 2011

❑ **STEEL DIVER** (3DS) 2011

❑ **NINTENDO LAND** (Wii U) 2012

❑ **NEW SUPER MARIO BROS U** (Wii U) 2012

❑ **LUIGI'S MANSION 2** (3DS) 2013

❑ **PIKMIN 3** (Wii U) 2013

❑ **SUPER MARIO MAKER** (Wii U) 2015

❑ **SPLATOON** (Wii U) 2015

❑ **STAR FOX ZERO** (Wii U) 2016

❑ **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD** (Wii U/Switch) 2017

❑ **STAR FOX 2** (SNES) 2017

❑ **SUPER MARIO BROS WONDER** (Switch) 2023



retro
GAMER

